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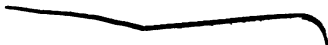
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"So when Hans was going away, he gave
him a fine young rose tree in a pot."
The Light of Life.

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100



THE LIGHT OF LIFE.





THE LIGHT OF LIFE.

"Except the Lord build the house; their labour is but lost that build it."—PSALM cxxvii. 1.

"WHAT more could have been done for it than I have done?" The cry came from an afflicted heart.

It was uttered by Hans Jansen, the Hamburg printer's only son, as he sat moaning over a dying rose-tree in the corner of a little back-yard behind his father's house.

Hans Jansen was what is commonly called *not all there*; that is, he could not see and comprehend the things of this life as his neighbours did. More than half of what passed around him

was hidden from his eyes. He was in part, though not altogether, an idiot.

It was a great distress to his parents that this should be the case—it had been so once, however. But, being good Christians, they had reconciled themselves to it, and learned by degrees, to see comfort through the cloud. If Hans was below the rest of the world in some ways, he was above them in others. The fear of God and the love of his neighbour had come to him almost as an instinct; at any rate without the struggles some people have to go through before their hearts are touched by either one or the other. He wouldn't have missed saying his prayers night and morning, or grace at meals, to please an emperor; and an unkind word about any one could never be got out of him. Truly their Hans was ripening for a better state of existence, whether he had any book-learning or not. He had nothing to fear, but everything to hope for, from death.

And he had one passion—one special cause of enjoyment and delight. He doated on flowers,

and was seldom seen without one in his button-hole all the summer through. But this was because his good-nature had made him many friends, who took a pleasure in seeing him pleased, and gave him a nosegay when they could. It was very well known that he had no garden of his own.

Mr. Jansen's house was a red brick one, in a row, with a square enclosure in front, covered with pebbles, and a square yard at the back, which had a pump in the middle and a dog-kennel on one side. It is true this yard was covered with soil, and there were scrubby patches of grass upon it here and there ; but it was used for a drying-ground, and had never once been brightened by flowers since the day it was first parcelled out and the walls were built round it, across which were now stretched the lines on which the linen was hung to dry.

The fact was, Mr. Jansen had not wished for a garden. He was busy from morning to night at his printing business in the town ; his wife had quite enough on her hands in household

cares ; and no effectual work could be expected from an idiot child.

How Hans came to be so fond of flowers was a mystery ; but there are many mysteries of this sort in the world. It had been so from his baby-days, and many were the hours he had spent, unnoticed, in a corner of that back-yard, grubbing in the old black soil, "making believe" to have a garden with beds and walks like those he had seen elsewhere. Nay, once or twice he had tried to grow mustard and cress, and even sweet-peas, a few seeds of which were given him by a neighbour's child ; but, somehow or other, nothing ever came of these real attempts, and he had to make himself happy with the make-believe garden at the end.

But it was no make-belief plant he was wailing over now, but a real *Géant de Batailles* rose-tree, which had been given him many weeks before. It was thus :—A good-natured nursery gardener, who knew his father, had let him walk through his grounds one flower-show day, before company came ; and having, by chance

noticed poor Hans sobbing from excitement at sight of the glories round him, his own heart melted ; for he had an only and very clever son himself, and he felt sorry for the darkness over his friend's child. So when Hans was going away, he gave him, not only a nosegay of the tulips and hyacinths, but a fine young rose-tree in a pot ; "as fine a Géant de Batailles as had ever been raised," said he to Hans, as he offered it, adding that it would flower in six or eight weeks, and brighten all the place up by its rich blaze of colour.

Hans trembled as he received it, and he stood with his mouth half open, irresolute and abashed, wanting to speak, yet not daring.

"What is it, boy ?" asked the nursery gardener. "Speak out."

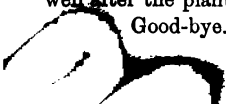
"How do you make your flowers so beautiful ?" gasped Hans, half afraid of what he had said.

"Well, well," returned the nursery gardener, with a smile, "some in one way and some in another ; but we don't tell our secrets to everybody. Nevertheless, I'll tell you how to make

your rose beautiful, for you'll make no bad use of anything, I'll be bound. You've a yard or a court, or some place with soil in it, eh?"

"Yes, yes," cried Hans.

"Then I'll tell you what you must do," pursued the nursery gardener. "Dig a hole in a sheltered place, pretty deep, you know, and put in a bone or two, and some hair (my son shall give you a handful) at the bottom. Then turn the plant out of the pot, not disturbing the ball of earth for the world, remember; and set it right down upon the hair. Then fill up the hole neatly with soil, and say nothing about what you've done to anybody, and there's an end. Keep it sheltered, mind, and water it at first, or if you see it get very dry, and with soap-suds whenever you can get them. Soap-suds and bones and hair are the main things. There's nothing like them for bringing roses to perfection. You'll have flowers as big as a hat, and as bright as cherries, before the summer's over, if you do as I say, and look well after the plant. There! good luck to you Good-bye."



And this was the plant—this, poor wizened thing—over which Hans was moaning. But how had it come to this? That was the difficulty. The gardener's son had given Hans the hair, and he had found the bones,—there were plenty by the dog-kennel; and he had dug the hole and put them at the bottom; and he had turned the plant out of the pot, and not broken the ball of earth; and he had placed it upon the hair, and filled up the hole; and watered it at first, and whenever he saw it get very dry, and with soap-suds on a wash-day; for he had only to ask and have, without question or trouble. He had done everything, in short—surely everything! For he had put it in the most sheltered spot he could find—in the self-same corner where he had played at make-believe gardens as a child; and it had seemed as if an old dream had suddenly come true. And as to looking well after it,—could a miser have watched his gold with more jealous care? And no one had interfered; for he had told nobody, partly from some indefinite idea that the nursery gardener had

ordered him not ; partly because he thought it would be so nice to surprise his mother, some day before the summer was over, by the rich blaze of colour that was to brighten all the place.

The very maid who hung out the clothes in the yard didn't know of it ; for to keep the secret, and make the shelter of the tree more complete, he had set up boards across the corner where it was planted, from wall to wall, and no one could see what was there. They took the boards for some idle freak of the idiot mind.

It was the buds that failed first ; those buds which ought to have swelled and grown larger day by day. Even his eye, sharpened now by anxious care, could detect that they rather dwindled than increased in size ; and, observing this more and more as time went on, he one day summoned courage to walk to the Nursery Gardens, and tell his fears to the giver of the plant.

But he, when he found that all he had ordered had been done, only smiled.





"I tell you again," said he, "and from long experience, there's nothing like bones and hair for bringing roses to perfection. You can't go wrong with them. Give it a little more water or soap-suds. You've perhaps a light soil in your place. Give it more water. The buds will swell fast enough, I'll be bound. Indeed, I fancy you're watching it so closely you can't see true. It's easy enough to do that, I can tell you. The buds are grown, I suspect, though you don't think so. Leave it to itself. Don't fancy anything wrong. It's sure to be right with bones and hair and soap-suds. They're the finest rose-manure in the world."

Hans listened with his mouth open, nodded his head, with a "Thank you!" at the end, and went away, hoping he had not "seen true." And he did not take the boards down nearly so often afterwards, lest his watching too closely should do harm. But every time he did take them down, he grew more and more unhappy. The healthy green of the leaves was no longer to be seen; as for the buds, they shrivelled gradually

more and more. Growth anywhere there was none. Inch by inch the plant was dying—or Hans thought so, and he rubbed his eyes for further light in vain. And one day, when the last leaves which remained, had crinkled up and turned brown, he sat down on the ground, and wailed, as I have said:—

“What more could I have done for it than I have done?”

The dream of a dream come true at last, was over. The make-believe garden was still the only one he had ever enjoyed. He must go back to it again.

He replaced the boards, for he shrank from the very sight of the dying plant, and sat down on the ground again, though he scarcely knew why.

But presently there was a barking of the dog, and an opening of the door, and a shouting of “Hans!” by his mother. The nursery gardener was passing that way, and had called to admire the roses he expected to see. Hans could not speak, but led the way to the corner of the yard, and, when they were there, he pointed to the

boards before he took them down, and exclaimed, trying to smile through his tears :

"I couldn't have sheltered it more, could I ? It's never been scorched, or chilled, or blown upon even. It's had bones, and hair, and water, and all you ordered, and I've looked well after it, and yet it's dead, I know !"

As he spoke, Hans lifted down the boards, and exposed the withered tree.

The nursery gardener stared at it, and then at Hans, in genuine amazement.

"You don't mean to say you've kept it *so* all the time ?" cried he. "Why, what have you been thinking about, man ? How could you expect it to live ? Why, it's had no light !"

"You said nothing about that," replied Hans, his face distorting with bewilderment and grief. "You said you made roses beautiful with bones, and hair, and soap-suds, and that I should make mine beautiful with them too."

"But not without sunshine," shouted the nursery gardener, quite excited at the idea of such a mistake.

Hans made no answer. He could not utter another word. He sat down on the ground again and hid his face in his hands.

"I must have spoken like a fool," exclaimed the nursery gardener, half to himself. "But who'd have thought of anybody fancying a plant could get on without light? Well, perhaps I ought to have thought though," added he, as his eye fell on poor Hans' doubled-up figure. Then, laying his hand on the lad's shoulder, it came into his heart to try and explain matters.

"Look up, Hans," said he. "It's not your fault at all—it's mine. There was something I forgot to tell you. I spoke like a fool when I talked of making roses beautiful with manure and things like that, as if they could do it of themselves. I didn't mean that. It is God who makes the roses, you know, and He makes them so that they can't do without the light He chooses them to live in, and that's the light from heaven—do you see?"

Here the nursery gardener paused to consider how he must go on, and Hans shuffled a bit and

then looked up at his friend. And his friend saw the light from heaven streaming on that sad, half intelligent face, with the red eyes straining upwards for comprehension ; and he proceeded.

“ So they can’t do without God’s light, let you give them what manure you will. They’re only helps, Hans, such things as those.

“ A man may help or hinder what God intends, by good or bad management, it’s true ; but that’s all, and that’s all I meant. Bones, and hair, and soap-suds are the finest rose-manure in the world, that’s true too, and it’s a great secret ; but they’re all nothing—nothing, lad !—without God’s secret—the light from heaven. Do you see what I mean, Hans ? ”

“ I’m trying,” said Hans.

“ Hans,” continued the nursery gardener, “ it’s been my fault, not yours ; and you shall have another rose-tree, or we’ll save this one yet, for if there’s a bit of life left in it, God’s light may bring it round. But tell me, now. You are a very good lad, you know, at times—indeed, I

fancy always; but no matter, we'll call it at times. What makes you ever good?"

Hans' catechism had been short, but sound; and he answered at once, "God's grace."

"Now that's just it!" shouted the nursery gardener, in delight. "That's just what I meant. And all the schooling, and teaching, and trying in the world won't do without God's grace, will they, Hans?"

Hans nodded his negative assent.

"No, they're only manures and helps," pursued the nursery gardener, "and very good things, no doubt, the same as bones, and hair, and soap-suds for roses, and there's nobody can dispute about *them*. But all the helps in the world can do nothing without the main thing God chooses them to thrive by, and that's God's grace for a man, and God's light for a plant; and what one is for one, that the other is for the other, and it's my opinion it's the light of Heaven for both.

If Hans did not quite follow the thread of the nursery gardener's argument he must be excused. The nursery gardener understood what he meant.

himself, and that was something; and Hans added to his small stock of observations the useful truth he had bought so dearly, viz. that plants cannot live without light.

Those who are interested further in his fate will be glad to hear that the nursery gardener soon after turned one side of the old printer's back-yard into a garden, at his own expense, and gave Hans such plants and help, that both mother and son had a few bright flowers of their own the next year, to delight their eyes.

But more than this. The poor lad proved so watchful and attentive; so obedient, too, to advice in his own small matters; and the rational occupation to an end seemed so evidently to clear a something from the confusion of his mind, that it struck the nursery gardener one day to trust him with some little employment on his more important premises. And the experiment was not unsuccessful. On the one subject of flowers Hans became not only trustworthy but intelligent.

And so it came to pass, that it was in the

as the Highest Wisdom could have made
the spirit, so long pent in an imperfect
tabernacle, return to the great Lord of
light and intelligence, without whom "not
strong, nothing is holy."



G I F T S.







GIFTS.

" Now there are diversities of gifts."—1 Cor. xii. 4.

ONE—two—three—four—five ; five neatly-raked kitchen-garden beds, four of them side by side, with a pathway between ; the fifth a narrow slip, heading the others, and close to the gravel walk, as it was for succession-crops of mustard and cress, which are often wanted in a hurry for breakfast or tea.

Most people have stood by such beds in their own kitchen-gardens on soft spring mornings and evenings, and looked for the coming up of the seeds which either they or the gardener had sown.



Radishes in one, for instance, and of all three sorts—white-turnip, red-turnip, and long-tailed.

Carrots in another; and this bed had been dug very deep indeed—subsoil digging, as it were; two spades' depth, that the roots might strike freely down.

Onions in another. Beets in the fourth; both the golden and red varieties: while the narrow slip was half mustard and half cress.

Such was the plan here, however; and here, for a time, all the seeds lay sleeping, as it seemed. For, as the long smooth-raked beds stretched out dark and bare under the stars, they betrayed no symptoms of anything going on within.

Nevertheless, there was no sleeping in the case. The little seed-grains were fulfilling the law of their being, each after its kind; the grains, all but their inner germs, decaying; the germs swelling and growing, till they rose out of their cradles, and made their way, through their earthen coverlid, to the light of day.

They did not all come up quite together, of course, nor all quite alike. But as to the time, the gardener had made his arrangements so cleverly, that none was very far behind his neighbour. And as to the difference of shape in the first young leaves, what could it signify? It is true the young mustards were round and thick; the cresses oval and pointed; the carrots mere green threads; the onions sharp little blades; while the beets had an odd, staid look. But they all woke up to the same life and enjoyment, and were all greeted with friendly welcome, as they appeared, by the dew, and light, and sunshine, and breezes, so necessary to them all, children of one mother, dependent on the same influences to bring them to perfection.

What *could* put comparisons, and envyings, and heart-burnings into their heads, so filling them either with conceit or melancholy misgivings? As if there was but one way of being right or doing right; as if every creature was *not* good after its kind, but must needs be good after somebody else's kind, or not be good at all.

It must have been some strolling half-informed grub, one would think, who had not yet come to his full senses, who started such foolish ideas.

It began with an inquiry at first, for no actual unkindness was meant.

"I find I get deeper and deeper into the soil every day," remarked the Carrot. "I shall be I don't know how long, at last. I have been going down regularly, quite straight, for weeks. Then I am tapering off to a long point at the end, in the most beautiful proportions possible. A traveller told me, the other day, this was perfection, and I believe he was right."

(That mischievous vagabond grub, you see!)

"I know what it was to live near the surface in my young days," the Carrot went on; "but never felt solid enjoyment till I struck deeply down, where all is so rich and warm. This is really being firmly established and satisfactory to one's-self, though still progressing, I hope, for I don't see why there should be a limit. Pray tell me, neighbours," added he, good-naturedly enough, "how it fares with all the rest of you."

I should like to know that your roots are as long, and slim, and orange-coloured as mine; doing as well, in fact, and sinking as far down. I wish us to be all perfect alike. Perfection is the great thing to try for."

"When you are sure you are trying in the right way," sneered a voice from the neighbouring radish bed (the red and white turnip variety were always satirical). "But if the long, slim, orange-roots, striking deep into the earth, are your idea of perfection, I advise you to begin life over again. Dear me! I wish you had consulted us before. Why, we stopped going down long ago, and have been spreading out sideways and all ways, into stout, round solid balls ever since, close white flesh throughout, inside; and not orange, but red without."

"White, he means," shouted another.

"Red, I call it," repeated the first. "But no matter; certainly not orange!"

And "Certainly not orange!" cried they all.

"So," continued the first speaker, "we are quite concerned to hear you ramble on about

growing longer and longer, and strongly advise you to keep your own counsel, and not mention it to any one else. We are friends, you know, and can be trusted; but you really must leave off wasting your powers and energy in the dark inside of the ground, out of everybody's sight and knowledge. Come to the surface, and make the most of it, as we do, and then you'll be a credit to your friends. Never mind what travelers say. They've nothing else to do but to walk about and talk, and they tell us we are perfection too. Don't trust to them, but to what we tell you now, and alter your course at once. Roll yourself up into a firm round ball as fast as you can. You won't find it hard if you once begin. You have only to—"

"Let me put in a word first," interrupted one of the long-tailed Radishes in the same bed; "for it is of no use to go out of one extreme into another, which you are on the high road to do if you are disposed to take Mr. Roundhead's advice; who, by the way, ought to be ashamed of forcing his very peculiar views upon his

neighbours. Just look at us. We always strike moderately down, so we know it's the right thing to do, and that solid round balls are the most unnatural and useless things in the world. But, on the other hand, my dear friend, we have learnt where to stop, and a great secret it is, but one I fear you know nothing about at present ; so the sooner you make yourself acquainted with it the better. There's a limit to everything but folly—even to striking deep into the soil. And as to the soil being better so very far down, nobody can believe it ; for why should it be ? The great art is to make the most of what is at hand, as we do. Time enough to go into the depths when you have used up what is so much easier got at. The man who gathered some of us yesterday called out, 'These are just right.' So I leave you to judge whether some other people we know of must not be wrong."

"You rather overwhelm me, I own," mused the Carrot ; "though it's remarkable you counsellors should not agree among yourselves. Is it possible, however, that I have been making

a great mistake all my life? What lost time to look back upon! Yet a ball; no, no, not a ball! I don't think I could grow into a solid round ball were I to try for ever!"

"Not having tried, how can you tell?" whispered the Turnip-Radish persuasively. "But you never will, if you listen to our old-fashioned friend next door, who has been halting between two opinions all his life:—will neither make an honest fat lump of it, as I do, nor plunge down and taper with you. But nothing can be done without an effort: certainly no change."

"That is true," murmured the Carrot, rather sadly; "but I am too old for further efforts myself. Mistake or no mistake, my fate is fixed. I am too far down to get up again, that's certain; but some of the young ones may try. Do you hear, dears? Some of you stop short, if you can, and grow out sideways and all ways, into stout, round, solid balls."

"Oh, nonsense about round balls!" cried the long-tailed Radish in disgust; "what will the world come to, if this folly goes on! Listen to

me, youngsters, I beg. Go to a moderate depth, and be content ; and if you want something to do, throw out a few fibres for amusement. You're firm enough without them, I know, but the employment will pass away time."

"There are strange delusions abroad just now," remarked the Onions to each other ; "do you hear all this talk about shape and way of growth ? and everybody in the dark on the subject, though they seem to be quite unconscious of the fact themselves. That fellow chattered about solid balls, as if there was no such thing as bulbs, growing layer upon layer, and coat over coat, at all. Of course the very long orange gentleman, with his tapering root, is the most wrong of the whole party ; but I doubt if Mr. Roundhead is much wiser when he speaks of close white flesh inside, and red (of all ridiculous nonsense) without. Where are their flaky skins, I should like to know ? Who is ever to peel them, I wonder ? Poor things ! I can't think how they got into such ways. How tough and obstinate they must be ! I wish we lived nearer.

We would teach them a little better than that, and show them what to do."

"*I* have lived near you long enough," grumbled a deep-red Beet in the next bed; "and you have never taught me; neither shall you, if I can help it. A pretty instructor you would be, who think it ridiculous to be red! I suppose you can't grow red yourself, and so abuse the colour out of spite. Now I flatter myself I am red inside as well as out, so I suppose I am more ridiculous than your friend who contrives to keep himself white within, according to his own account; but I doubt the fact. There, there! it is a folly to be angry; so I say no more, except this: get red as fast as you can. You live in the same soil that I do, and ought to be able."

"Oh, don't call it red!" exclaimed a golden Beet, who was of a gentle turn of mind; "it is but a pale tint after all, and surely rather amber than red; and perhaps that was what the long-tailed orange gentleman meant."

"Perhaps it was; for perhaps he calls red orange, as you call it amber," answered the

redder Beet ; "anyhow he has rather more sense than our neighbour here, with his layer upon layer, and coat over coat, and flaky skin over all. Think of wasting time in such fiddle-faddle proceedings ! Grow a good honest fleshy substance, and have done with it, and let people see you know what life is capable of. I always look at results. It is something to get such a body as I do out of the surrounding soil. That is living to some purpose, I consider. Nobody makes more of their opportunities than I do, I flatter myself, or has more to show for their pains ; and a great future must be in store."

"Do you hear them ? oh ! do you hear them ?" whispered the Cress to her neighbour the Mustard (there had been several crops, and this was one of the last) ; "do you hear how they all talk together of their growth, and their roots, and their bulbs, and size, and colour, and shape ? It makes me quite unhappy, for I am doing nothing like that myself—nothing, nothing, though I live in the same soil ! What is to be done ? What do *you* do ? Do you grow great white solid balls,

or long, orange tapering roots, or thick red flesh, or bulbs with layer upon layer, and coat over coat? Some of them talked of just throwing out a few fibres as a mere amusement to pass away time; and this is all I ever do for business. There will never be a great future in store for me. Do speak to me, but whisper what you say, for I shame to be heard or thought of."

"I grow only fibres too," groaned the Mustard in reply; "but I would spread every way and all ways if I could—downwards and upwards, and side ways and all ways, like the rest. I wish I had never been sown. Better never be sown and grown, than sown and grown to such trifling purpose! We are wretched indeed. But there must be injustice somewhere. The soil must give them what it refuses to us."

"Or we are weak and helpless, and cannot take in what it offers," suggested the Cress. "Alas! that we should have been sown only to be useless and unhappy!"

And they wept the evening through. But they alone were not unhappy. The Carrot had

become uneasy, and could follow his natural tastes no longer in comfort, for thinking that he ought to be a solid round ball, white inside, and red without. The Onion had sore misgivings that the Beet might be right after all, and a good honest mass of red flesh be more worth labouring for, than the pale coat-within-coat growth in which he had indulged. It did seem a waste of trouble, a fiddle-faddle plan of life, he feared. Perhaps he had not gone down far enough in the soil. Some one talked of growing fibres for amusement—he had certainly not come to that; they were necessary to his support; he couldn't hold fast without them. Other people were more independent than he was, then; perhaps wiser,—alas!

And yet the Beet himself was not quite easy; for talk as he would, what he had called fiddle-faddle seemed ingenious when he thought it over, and he would like to have persuaded himself that he grew layer upon layer too. But it wouldn't do.

Perhaps, in fact, the bold little Turnip-Radishes

alone, from their solid, substantial growth, were the only ones free from misgivings, and believed that everybody ought to do as they did themselves.

What a disturbance there was, to be sure ! And it got worse and worse, and they called on the winds and fleeting clouds, the sun, and moon, and stars above their heads, to stay their course awhile, and declare who was right and who was wrong ; who was using, who abusing his gifts and powers ; who was making most, who least, of the life and opportunities they all enjoyed ; whose system was the one the rest must all strive to follow—the one only right.

But they called and asked in vain ; till one evening, the clouds which had been gathering over the garden for days began to come down in rain, and sank swiftly into the ground, where it had been needed for long. Whereupon there was a general cry, " Here comes a messenger ; now we shall hear ! " as if they thought no one could have any business in the world but to settle their disputes.

So out came the old inquiries again:—who was right—who was wrong—who had got hold of the true secret? But the Cress made no inquiry at all, only shook with fright under the rain; for, thought she, the hour of my shame and degradation is come; poor useless creature that I am, I shall never more hold up my head!

As to the Carrot, into whose well-dug bed the rain found easiest entrance, and sank deepest, he held forth in most eloquent style upon the whole affair;—how it was started, and what he had said; how much he had once hoped; how much he now feared.

Now, the Rain-drops did not care to answer in a hurry; but as they came dropping gently down, they murmured, "Peace, peace, peace!" all over the beds. And truly they seemed to bring peace with them as they fell, so that a calm sank all around, and then the murmur proceeded:—"Poor little atoms in a boundless kingdom—each one of you bearing a part towards its fulness of perfection, each one of you endowed with gifts and powers especially your

own, each one of you good after its kind—how came these cruel misgivings and heart-burnings among you? Are the tops of the mountains wrong because they cannot grow corn like valleys? Are the valleys wrong because they cannot soar into the skies? Does the brook flow in vain because it cannot spread out like the sea? Is the sea only right because its waters only are salt? Each good after its kind, each bearing a part in the full perfection of the kingdom which is boundless, the plan which is harmony—peace, peace, peace upon all!”

And peace seemed to fall more soothingly than ever upon the ground as the shower continued to descend.

“How much more, then,” resumed the murmur, “among you, to whose inner natures gifts and powers are given, each different from each; each good in its kind; each, if rightly carried out, doing service in that kingdom, which needs for its full perfection, that there shall be mountains to rise into the skies, valleys to lie low at their feet; some natures to go deep into the soil,

others to rejoice on its surface ; some to lie lightly upon the earth, as if scarcely claiming a home, others to grasp at it by wide-spread roots, and stretch out branches to the rivers ; all good in their kind, all bearing a part in the glory of that universe whose children are countless as their natures are various—none useless, none in vain.

“ Upon one, then, upon all—each wanted, each useful, each good after its kind—peace, peace, peace, peace, peace ! ” . . .

The murmur subsided to a whisper, the whisper into silence ; and by the time the moon-shadows lay upon the garden there was peace everywhere.

Nor was it broken again ; for henceforth even the Cress held up her head—she, also, good after her kind.

Only once or twice, that year, when the Carrots were gathered, there came up the strangest growths—thick, distorted lumps, that had never struck properly down.

The gardener wondered, and was vexed, for he

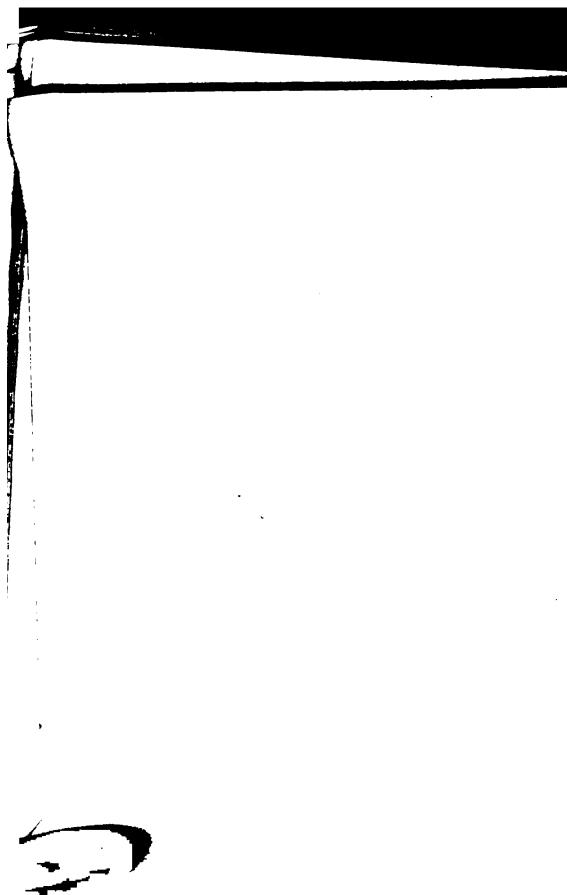
prided himself on the digging of the carrot-bed. "Anything that had had any sense might have gone down into it, he was sure," he said. And he was not far wrong; but you see the Carrot had had no sense when he began to speculate, and tried to be something he was not intended to be.

Yet the poor clumsy thing was not quite useless after all. For, just as the gardener was about to fling it angrily away, he recollected that the cook might use it for soup, though it could not be served up at table—such a shape as it was! . . .

And this was exactly what she did.



NIGHT AND DAY.





of Night had a frosty mane, while that of Day had a shiny one. Moreover, foam fell from Frosty-mane's bit as he went along, which dropped on the earth as dew, and Shiny-mane's mane was so radiant that it scattered light through the air at every step. And thus they drove on, bringing darkness and light over the earth in turn—each pursuing and pursued; but knowing so little of this simple fact, that one of their chief causes of dispute was, which was going first. For of course if they had been able to settle that, it would have been known which was the more important of the two. But as they drove in a circle the point could not be decided, since what was first on one side was sure to be last on the other; as anybody may see who tries to draw their journey. They never gave this a thought however, and there were no school-masters about just then to teach them. So round and round the world they went, without even knowing that it was round, still less that there is no such thing as first and last in a circle. And they never succeeded in overtaking, so as to





























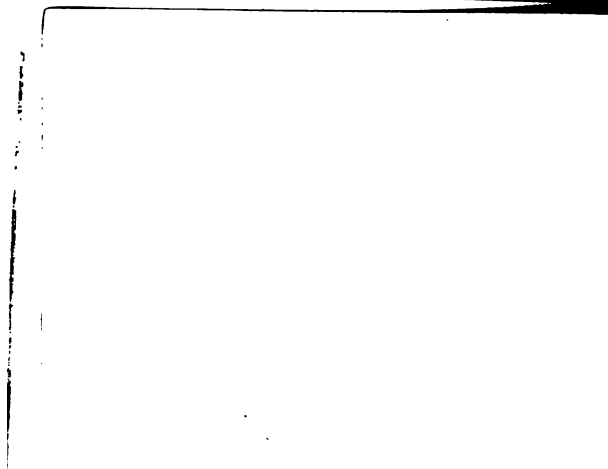














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not another form of unjust restraint. Masters ? had he not proved himself the master in every case yet ? And so he had done here—here, where, as Egeria had prophesied, he would have given worlds to forbear. Now rose before him the only half-valued tenderness, the anxiety for his daily comfort, the little personal sacrifices in his favour, and this as the conclusion ; that because the canter had been prolonged, and she had wished to rest, and so checked him with the bridle, the old habit had proved too strong for him, and prompted him to kick, kick, kick !—and he had kicked till she was stretched at his feet. . . .

More than an hour passed, and Firefly stood by her still. Stood in the same spot, seeing the same sight, without care to go his own way, now that he might have done it at will.

And then came the trampling of feet, horses and other men, and among them all a father in the first agony of despair. But no one noticed Firefly—he was nothing to his masters then, and so he stood on there like a horse of marble, in the same old place, looking at what he had done.



subjection of the will, not merely the control of the body,—the full and complete recognition of the mastership and superiority of man. This, and this only, is what is wanted when the legs are tied up, and struggles rendered powerless by force, so that the indignant animal is brought through exhaustion of body to submission of feeling. He has plunged, he has kicked, he has reared, for hours together, if he will have it so ; but the man stands by him unscathed, unruffled, and still kind :—his master and superior—the terrible discipline proves it ; but still kind—and the kindness proves it too.

All this Firefly went through ; and when the Rarey-breaker “gentled” him all over his miserable frame, as he lay panting and overpowered on the sawdust, conquered and convinced at last, all his mistakes and misconceptions of other people came before him, as plainly as if Taffy himself had spoken them ; so plainly, that he wondered at himself. But remembering his old and all-too-firmly-adhered-to resolution to kick, kick, kick, whenever he was vexed, a fresh out-





"Death also may restore as I do" added she
"orderly" for the harvest moon was shining.
Night and Day. Page 5



NIGHT AND DAY.

"The city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon to shine in it; for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof."—Rev. xxi. 23.

IN old times, long long ago, when Night and Day were young and foolish, and had not discovered how necessary they were to each other's happiness and well-being, they chased each other round the world in a state of angry disdain; each thinking that he alone was doing good, and that therefore the other, so totally unlike himself in all respects, must be doing harm, and ought to be got rid of, altogether, if possible.

Old northern tales say that they rode, each of them in a car with a horse to it; but the horse

of Night had a frosty mane, while that of Day had a shiny one. Moreover, foam fell from Frosty-mane's bit as he went along, which dropped on the earth as dew, and Shiny-mane's mane was so radiant that it scattered light through the air at every step. And thus they drove on, bringing darkness and light over the earth in turn—each pursuing and pursued; but knowing so little of this simple fact, that one of their chief causes of dispute was, which was going first. For of course if they had been able to settle that, it would have been known which was the more important of the two. But as they drove in a circle the point could not be decided, since what was first on one side was sure to be last on the other; as anybody may see who tries to draw their journey. They never gave this a thought however, and there were no school-masters about just then to teach them. So round and round the world they went, without even knowing that it was round, still less that there is no such thing as first and last in a circle. And they never succeeded in overtaking, so as to

pass each other, though they sometimes came up very close, and then there was twilight.

Of the two, one grumbled and the other scolded the more, and it is easy to guess which did which. Night was gloomy by nature, especially when clouds hid the moon and stars, so her complaints took a serious, melancholy tone. She was really broken-hearted at the exhaustion produced all over the world by the labours and pleasures which were carried on under the light of day, and used to receive the earth back as if it was a sick child and she a nurse, who had a right to be angry with what had been done to it. Day, on the contrary, was amazingly cheerful, particularly when the sun shone ; never troubled his head about what was to happen when his fun was over : on the contrary, thought his fun ought to last for ever because it was pleasant, was quite vexed when it was put a stop to, and had no scruple in railing at his rival ; whose only object, as it seemed to him, was to overshadow and put an end to all the happiness that was to be found.

"Cruel Night," he exclaimed, "what a life you lead me! How you thwart me at every turn! What trouble I have to take to keep your mischief in check. Look at the mists and shadows I must drive on one side, before I can make the world bright with my beautiful light! And no sooner have I done so than I feel your cold unwholesome breath trying to come up to me behind! But you shall never overtake me if I can help it: though I know that is what you want. You want to throw your hateful black shadow over my bright and pleasant world."

"*I* doing mischief which *you* have to keep in check!" groaned Night, quite confused by the accusation. "I, whose whole time is spent in trying to repair the mischief other people do: *your* mischief, in fact, you wasteful consumer of life and power! Every twelve hours I get back from you a half worn-out world, and this I am expected to restore and make as good as new again, but how is it possible? Something I can do, I know. Some wear and tear I can renew and refresh, but some, alas!

I cannot ; and thus creep in destruction and death."

"Hear her," cried Day, in contempt, "taunting me with the damage I do, and the death and destruction I cause ! I the life-giver, at whose touch the whole world awakes which else might be asleep for ever. She, the grim likeness of the death she talks about, and bringing death's twin sister in her bosom."

"You are Day the destroyer. I, Night the restorer," persisted Night, evading the argument.

"I am Day the lifegiver, you Night the desolator," replied Day, bitterly.

"I am Night the restorer, you Day the destroyer," repeated Night.

"You are to me what death is to life," shouted Day.

"Then death is a restorer as I am," exclaimed Night.

And so they went on, like all other ignorant and obstinate arguers ; each full of his own one idea, and taking no heed of what the other might

say. How could the truth be got at by such means? Of course it could not, and of course, therefore, they persisted in their rudeness. And there were certain seasons particularly, when they became more impertinent to each other than ever. For instance, whenever it was summer, Day's horse, Shiny-mane, got so strong and frisky that Night had much ado to keep her place at all, so closely was she pressed in the chase. Indeed, sometimes there was so little of her to be seen that people might have doubted whether she had passed by at all, had it not been for the dew Frosty-mane scattered, and which those saw who got up early enough in the morning.

Oh, the boasting of Day at these times! And really he believed what he said. He really thought it would be the greatest possible blessing if he were to go on for ever, and there were to be no Night. Perhaps he had the excuse of having heard a whisper of some old tradition to that effect: but the principal cause of the mistake was, that he thought too much about himself, and too little about his neighbour. "Fortunate

world," cried he ; " it must be clear to every one, now, who it is that brings blessings, and does good to you and your inhabitants. Good old earth, you become more and more lovely and fruitful, the more and more I shorten the hours of Night and lengthen my own. We can do tolerably well without her restoring power it would seem ! If we could be rid of her altogether, therefore, what a Paradise there would be ! Then the foliage, the flowers, the fruits, the precious crops of this my special season would last for ever. Would that it could remain uninterrupted ! "

" He is praying for a curse. Were it granted no life could exist," murmured Night ; and Frosty-mane's dew fell in tears as she spoke. No one heard her ; however, but the dew was very acceptable, for the weather was very hot.

And she had her revenge ; for when it was summer on one side the globe it was winter on the other ; and then it was her turn to boast, as it was in winter that Frosty-mane came out in all his glory ; every now and then running his car so nearly side by side with

of system and order ; one who had taken for his motto the words of the poet :

“ —because right is right, to follow right
Were wisdom in the scorn of consequence.”

The father, on the other hand, past middle-age, was old for his years ; for the fire of his spirit had died out, but the power of his intellect remained unaltered, as is often the case in fine natures ; and an originally widely-educated judgment grew wider and gentler as the river of his life widened out to the everlasting sea. He doubted about his son's motto, therefore, as a universal rule of life. It had to be considered, said he, whether the “right” you followed, or the “consequence” you scorned, was of the greater vital importance. There was a right and a wrong—he once added as a homely illustration—in the way of cutting a pencil ; but if you had to deal with a weak-leaded one, which would not bear long shoulders without breaking, it was better to cut it with short shoulders than waste it altogether. If he had to choose a motto himself it must be from the broader teaching of St. Pau

from time to time at midday, by the light of Shiny-mane's hair. Nothing could quite put that out, even in winter when the weather was fine ; and sometimes it shone over the ice and snow so brightly that they glittered like diamonds, or might almost have been taken for fireworks.

And so things went on till a check came, and it came in a very odd way. It is not always very easy to tell the exact causes of change even in one's own mind, much less in other people's, so I do not pretend to trace the whole process out in this case. But Night and Day did grow wiser as time went on, for, as every one knows, there is no squabbling or boasting going on between them now. On the contrary, they glide after each other as gently and sweetly as possible, without any kicking of horses or rumbling of chariot wheels. And one may conclude that after the first flush of feeling cooled down, they were better able to look round them and judge dispassionately of each other. And, lo and behold ! they discovered at last that there were just two portions of the globe, where each had in turn his

own way as nearly as possible for six whole months at a time ; viz. at the Poles : and that yet, nevertheless, the brilliant consequences which they had insisted would occur under these circumstances, never took place. On the contrary, these were the dreariest and most desolate portions of the whole globe,—barren wastes of ice and rock, where both animal and vegetable life were at the lowest possible ebb. Nothing could be more mortifying, it must be owned. In vain did Shiny-mane drive round and round that frozen horizon with a light that was never interrupted : where was the promised Paradise which was to follow ?—the foliage, the flowers, the fruits, the precious crops which should have adorned this unchecked reign of Day, where were they ? The dove would have sought in vain here for even a shrub on which to rest her foot. Scarcely a wandering seagull ever disturbed the death-like stillness of the air. Day, the lifegiver, looked down upon a kingdom without life ! What wonder if he began at last to distrust himself ! What wonder if he went on to suspect that there

might be some truth in what Night had said after all ! That she might in some way or other be Night the restorer ; in some way, however mysterious and unaccountable, be necessary to his own prosperity.

And it was the same with Night, when her turn came round. In vain did Frosty-mane distil his dews. They were useful—at least Night thought so—everywhere else ; but here, what did they avail ? Here was the unbroken rest which was to recruit and refresh all Nature : now her secret powers might work as they pleased : there was no waste of power now either from labour or heat, or any other destructive cause : but where were the giant races of man and beast and plant that were to arise in consequence ? The wear and tear of life had stopped, but what was the Earth advantaged ? Night, the restorer, ruled, but over a kingdom where there was nothing to restore ! Well might tears mingle with her dews. Well might she call to the morning stars to bring back that Day whom once she had dreaded as a rival, but now longed for as a friend. Day the

lifegiver, he had called himself, and Day the lifegiver perhaps he was. Certainly without him she could do nothing ; at any rate here, where he was not, the whole earth was a blank !

They had made a terrible mistake, that was clear ; and if they did not at first see that there must be other and more important powers at work, besides theirs, or the good old earth would not be what it is in most places, they must be excused. People cannot grow quite wise all at once, and they had made a very good beginning by learning to distrust themselves ; that being always the first step towards doing justice to a neighbour.

“I called you Day the destroyer, bright and beautiful friend,” murmured Night, in her softest tones ; “you who bring light over my shadows, and make my good deeds known to all men. Day, the lifegiver, forgive me, and return at the seasons appointed. Touch the earth with your glory from time to time, lest all things perish from its face, and it and I are forgotten together.”



"But I mistook your friendly shadow for that of death," answered Day, with his sweetest smile, though tears trembled in his eyes as he thought of the injustice, causing the brightest of rainbows to span the landscape below: "and that was a thousand times worse! You, in whose silence and rest the very fountains of life are renewed. Ah, while earth remains what it is, an everlasting day—a day without night—would be destruction! Dear friend, forgive me, and ever and ever return."

"There is nothing to forgive," whispered Night, as she came round once more. "And death also may restore as I do," added she tenderly; for the harvest moon was shining upon long fields of golden corn, some waving still, some gathered into sheaves; and she felt particularly hopeful about everything.

"Any how we are friends—loving, helpful friends," sang Day.

"Friends—comforting and abiding friends," echoed Night in return, as the weary world sank on her bosom; eyes closing, limbs relaxing, and

than good among those whose souls' health you are bound to consider. You cannot get them to understand your motives, and they will abominate the act. What you lose will be far more, therefore, than what you will gain. Of my personal feelings I say nothing. On that point I suspect we suffer together. Now, then, do as you please."

If the father hoped, by yielding a point so trying to himself, to set Geronimo an example of giving way, he deceived himself. Geronimo did not accept what he said as an example, but as an acknowledgment of an error that needed rectifying. About any consequences to other people he refused to think at all. Consequences were nothing in matters of duty and principle.

So he went to Roger, the village-mason, explained what he wanted, and gave his orders, announcing his intention of coming himself to assist. But the man stared in astonishment. "You ben't in earnest surely, sir?" said he. "Surely you're never going to pull down your *own* mother's tombstone? Why, it'll break the

foolish. And from time to time, according as we keep our ears open or shut, little streams of melody do float round us from the natural world, as musical sounds break out from the strings of an old-fashioned Æolian harp when the wind blows over it, or sweep along the wires of the electric telegraph on breezy days. Listen only, and you will hear. And which speaks you can surely guess, for they praise each other now and not themselves. One sings—

“Dear Night, whom once I dreaded as the dark end of life and enjoyment. Dear Night, whom now I know as the forerunner of life renewed. Welcome, blessed restorer; take our worn-out child to your bosom. Drop over her striving and straining your mantle of repose. All her day-labourers grow weary, for a portion of life goes from them, in the toil of limb and of muscle, in the working of eye and of brain; in all the changes that circle round an ever-changing world. Restore what thou canst and may'st, let the rest remain in hope; for the mercy thou bringest now, foreshadows a greater in store.

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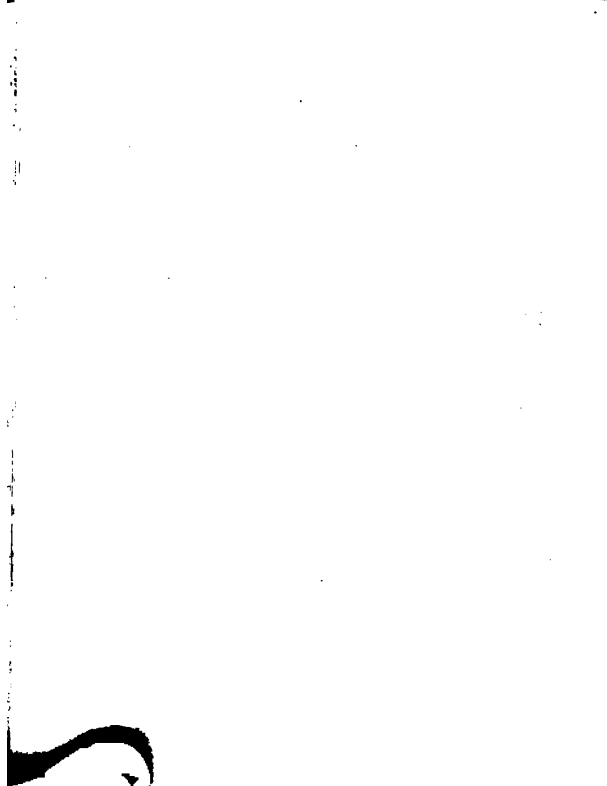
Oh, type of the mighty change which must one day pass upon all ; of the deep mysterious rest in which all things shall be renewed ; of the needful, hopeful death which quickens unto life ! Dear Night, my sister and friend, the twilight shades approach, and I see in thankful peace your darker shadows beyond."

And the other answers in turn.

"Dark and secret my mission ; men call me Night the gloomy ; but I hold in my bosom the germs of a glory full of hope ; hiddenly working within, till thou, the lifegiver, returnest, to break through the mists and shadows, and touch my nurslings with light. So, at the first creation, at the touch of the first young dawn, lo ! gleams of life universal were lit all over the world, and nature, amazed, awoke in songs of thanksgiving and joy.

"So come, then, Day the lifegiver, ever and ever reviving the slumbering germs I nourish, the hidden life I feel. Welcome for this, but thrice welcome as type of a dayspring eternal, that shall dawn at last on the night of sin and

sorrow and death ; when, our secret missions accomplished, our secret workings completed, thou and I, oh, life-giving Day, shall merge our blessings in one :—when the light that never fades, and the life that never wearies, shall be one with the rest eternal, that remaineth evermore !”





KICKING.





KICKING.

“Rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft.”—1 SAM. xv. 23.

THREE years of complete liberty, and then to have to learn in three short weeks to submit entirely to the will of other people !

This sounds a hard plan of education, and perhaps is not the very best one possible. Still, thousands of young colts have turned into good horses upon it; and if there is to be a reform, it must come from above, not from below. Reforms from below savour of rebellion, and that is sure to lead to a reaction the wrong way again.

Yet people ought not to blind themselves—those above, I mean, any more than those below.

Every man, therefore, ought to sit from time to time in his neighbour's chair, and look with his neighbour's eyes, from his neighbour's position, at what he himself is about. It is wonderful how much wiser, as well as kinder, people grow if they do this.

And among a man's neighbours he should not be ashamed to reckon the creatures he collects round him for his own convenience and amusement, and calls his "domestic animals." Why "domestic," but that he has taken them from their own natural homes, and brought them to his? And if so, surely it is not too much to ask that he should give them, each in his degree, the comforts of a home-citizenship, in return for the duties he exacts. If he does this honestly, a few errors of judgment on his part will not matter more than a few errors of conduct on theirs; for imperfection has not only to be struggled against, but borne in this world.

Sitting in neighbour Firefly the spirited young chestnut colt's chair, then, it is but fair to own that he may well have felt it queer, after three

years' luxury of doing as he liked in large grassy pastures, to find himself suddenly cooped up in a small square stuffy place, ceiled in instead of open to the air, and surrounded by walls, to one particular part of which he was fastened by a horrible contrivance that went round his head and neck, and gave him a most unpleasant pull whenever he tried to get away. But yesterday he was free as the wind, so far as the hedges extended—could gallop from one to the other while his breath lasted; might snort at the passengers in the road which skirted the field as much as he pleased; throw out his legs at everything and everybody; kick, plunge, bound, jump till he was tired; whinny at his companions, whether he had anything worth saying or not; and all this at will: while now—but the contrast is too painful to dwell upon, for Firefly was now in a horse-breaker's stable, with a halter round his neck.

He had one consolation, however, and it is not a small one to most people—indeed it ought always to be a matter of thankfulness to all—he

thing was wanting. If from long habit a good many still came out to follow himself and his father to church, they did so at a greater and greater distance. Only a few came up now to claim the friendly greeting, which he remembered as part of the Sunday's intercourse in the days of his childhood. Geronimo was puzzled.

Yet, if the kaleidoscope had but turned round for contemplation that crystal from the wisdom of St. Paul, "Destroy not him with thy meat for whom Christ died," he would have known the cause of estrangement, and how to apply a cure. As it was, an idea at once bright and kind struck him, and he lost no time in carrying it out with zeal.

Geronimo was musical—he had been so from childhood upwards—had introduced better music as well as greater beauty into the venerable old church; and for both these things the people were grateful, as they ought to be.

He would make use of this happily universal feeling; he would give a treat to high and low—would have a festival; they should keep holiday

Now, as was natural, one of the first things he did was to call out for his old companions of the field, and this he did in colt's fashion of course ; but what colt's fashion really is will not be known till men become good linguists, and have learnt other languages besides those of their own race. At present they are miserably backward in that branch of learning, and have no idea even of what flies talk about, though they hear them murmuring away in the air as soon as they themselves awake every summer morning, and for nearly all day after.

Well, in colt's fashion Firefly shouted for his companions, and after two or three attempts, each of them louder than the one before, must have made himself heard ; for at last he was answered, though from what seemed a great distance, so smothered were the sounds. But this was only because they came through stone walls. In point of fact, his young friends, Whitefoot and Silverstar by name, were very near—namely, in the very next adjoining stable—both of them captives like himself ; both of

them with halters round their necks, one in one stall, one in another.

Conversation was difficult under such circumstances, and could not be carried on long. What they did say, when they discovered they were near each other, amounted to about this :—

"So you are somewhere hereabouts, too, Whitefoot and Silverstar. Why don't you come where I am? Where are you?"

"We don't know where we are. Where are you? Why don't you come to us?"

"Because something twitches my head if I try to move away; so I can't."

"That's just what happens to us; so we can't."

"It's abominable!"

"It's very distressing."

"I wonder what it means! I am very angry."

"We wonder too, but it can't be helped."

Here the dialogue ended, for the colts were not the only inhabitants of the two stables. In the one, with Whitefoot and Silverstar, was a good-tempered, middle-aged, Welsh pony, known

all over the country-side as good old Taffy. In the other, with Firefly, was an old, half-bred white Arabian mare, whose mother had been brought from the East.

Old people who talk to young ones should think of the young ones more than themselves. If they want to gossip and grumble, and let off vexed feelings, let them do it to each other. Life is very trying sometimes as age comes on, and those of the same age can understand the feelings of the age, and make allowance for the groanings of the natural man. But young creatures may easily be led away by a few sad or passionate words, into believing all sorts of nonsense. I say, then, let old people unburden their personal feelings to each other, but never talk anything but useful sense, or pleasant nonsense, to a child.

Had the old white mare in the stable thought of this, it would have been better for Firefly—perhaps, at least, he would not have had the same encouragement to turn out unmanageable which she now gave him. For no sooner had

uttered the words, "I wonder what it means! I am very angry," to his companions next door, than she shook her own halter till the rattle roused his attention, and then observed, in a tone of melancholy which was of itself quite impressive:—"I can tell you what it means, but I am afraid when you know you will not be less angry than now, but rather more."

Firefly's quick blood ran quicker at the startling announcement.

"Oh, dear, what makes you say so? Who can you be?" cried he in excitement.

"One who ought to know something, if age and experience can instruct," answered the sorrowful old mare, adding, in a lower tone still, "or if unusual opportunities in early life have not been lost upon her."

"I am almost afraid of hearing, yet suspense is intolerable," cried Firefly. "Where am I? What is going to happen?"

"You are a prisoner, at the mercy of those who shut you up," answered the old mare, to whose monotonous existence the power of lashing

a young colt up to indignation was rather an amusing novelty. "It is the first time this has happened to you I suppose?"

"It is the first time I was ever made fast in this way," groaned Firefly. "If I was ever in an enclosure before, it was loose by my mother's side. My memory is confused so far back."

"I, too, had a mother once," murmured the old mare, Egeria; and her grief in thinking how long ago made her pause.

"Tell me about her," exclaimed Firefly; "what became of her? I want to know."

"What a tone you speak in," answered Egeria. "You want to know! You forget you are a prisoner, and must learn to want nothing but what is given you."

"I shall never learn that," cried he; "and why am I a prisoner? tell me that."

"Because the people you belong to want to make you useful—useful to them, that is."

"And why must I be useful to them? Why may I not please myself as I have done before? What are *they* to me?"

"Ask *them*," said Egeria, coldly. "They will tell you—masters, superiors."

"You provoke me," cried Firefly, stamping into the straw at his feet. "Tell me why I am here, as you promised. My former history is short enough, as you shall hear. I—"

"Spare yourself the trouble," interrupted Egeria; "Our histories in this country are all alike. We are left to ourselves for nearly three years, and are taught nothing; then our superiors get hold of us, by fright and force, and in three weeks make us learn everything they want."

"And then?" gasped Firefly.

"And then it depends upon the people into whose hands one falls, whether one is well or ill-used."

"And you have borne all this in patience?" asked Firefly.

"I had no heart to act otherwise," sighed Egeria. "I felt no spirit to resist."

"But I feel plenty of spirit, and *shall* resist," cried the young chestnut, straining against the halter as hard as he could bear, and dashing his

legs against the sides of the stall, first on one side, then on the other.

"But what can you do?" whined Egeria, a little startled by his violence.

"Do!" shouted Firefly; "why, I shall kick, kick, kick!" And each time he uttered the word he struck out against the wooden partition between the stalls. Egeria began to be alarmed.

"I do not advise it," she said; "I assure you it will do no good. You had better bear it all as well as you can."

"Oh, that is all very well for those who can receive it, old lady," exclaimed Firefly: "I can't. I can't stand injustice; and, what's more, I won't. Why my blood is boiling already. Only to think of the way they drove us along before they got us here. Of course, if I had known, I should never have left the field. And the still worse fright those men gave me when they all laid hold of me and threw this horrible thing over my head! It's all treachery and injustice from beginning to end."

"Ah! if we were but in my mother's country!" sighed Egeria.

"Why, what then?" inquired Firefly.

"Oh, my poor young friend, I'm afraid it will do more harm than good to tell you," said Egeria; "yet, if you wish it so very much, I hardly know how to refuse."

The old goose, to consent to tell what she felt might do harm! But she was vain of knowing more than other people on the subject, which she really did. Besides which, she wanted to stop Firefly's kicking and plunging, by holding his attention. So said she—

"The people there—in the East, I mean—treat young colts quite differently from the people here. As soon as ever they can leave their mothers, they are brought among the tents, where the men, women, and children live, and the women take care of them, and feed them, and pet them. So they get used to their masters from the first, and there is not the fright and horror and startling change to go through which we suffer so much from at the end of our

first three years ; and so the halter, and teaching, and all that sort of thing, come much easier—though, of course, restraint is restraint everywhere. But, for pity's sake, don't begin to kick again," concluded Egeria, interrupting herself at the sound of renewed struggles on Firefly's part. "I have been telling you my mother's story to keep you quiet."

"Quiet!" shouted the miserable colt. "I won't be quiet, to please anybody. How can I be quiet, when I want to get away from this savage country, and go to that other one—that East you talk of—where colts are properly managed?"

"But, my dear young friend, consider—it's too late," expostulated Egeria. "You can't begin life over again. You really musn't let your feelings run away with you in this foolish way. People here don't mean badly, altogether. They are tolerably kind, on the whole ; at least, some of them are. They feed you well, as you see ; and after you have learnt what they teach, you will be glad, though you won't like it while it's going on."

"Then it shan't go on!" shouted Firefly. "They shan't teach me! I won't learn! I won't have their food, or their kindness! If they had brought me up properly, I could have submitted as well as anybody; but they have been unjust, and now I won't! I'll do something—I'll go to the East; and if I can't go to the East, I'll kick!"

"Oh, hush!—do, pray, hush!" said Egeria, who, to do her justice, had merely wanted to excite a sympathetic grumble, not to rouse a storm. "You go much too far, I assure you."

"*You* say that, because you have no spirit, you poor old creature!" exclaimed Firefly. "You know you haven't—you said so yourself, just now; but that's no rule for me."

"If I have not much spirit," remarked Egeria, "I may have some sense, and I want you to have some too. You can't get away, to begin with—so the East is out of the question; and you cannot resist these people to any purpose—so, take my advice, submit and have done with it. I can tell

you, from long experience, that kicking is never of any use."

"Then I shall go on kicking, out of spite, *because* it's of no use," cried Firefly; and as he announced this grand resolution, he broke out all over into a profuse sweat from excitement.

At which moment the stable-door opened, and the horsebreaker stepped in, just to have a look at the colt; and after doing so, and observing his irritable and uneasy condition, said he to himself, "I shall have a good deal of trouble with *this* one, I'm afraid."

Now, in saying this, he was making a sort of comparison between Firefly and the other two; for he had just been in the next stable, and seen Whitefoot and Silverstar unusually placid and quiet—for fresh-caught colts, that is to say; nobody expects from a kitten the gravity of a cat. But what wonder? Besides that they were greys, and therefore easier-tempered by nature than was to be expected from a chestnut (for in horses, colour and disposition are apt to go together), they had been hearing nothing but

good advice ever since they were shut up—and, what is more, they had actually been attending to it!

But, then, good old Taffy gave his good old advice in such a very pleasant way! "My dear friends," cried he, when he heard them plunging about in their stalls at first, "I do feel so sorry for you—so very, very sorry—because I know so well what you suffer. Just the same was done with me when I was your age."

"Oh, how did you bear it?" asked the colts.

"Well, well, I was very impatient just at the beginning," answered Taffy; "for my Welsh blood made me chafe at the confinement, and I was alone, and had nobody to explain the meaning of it all to me, so it was hard work; and this makes me particularly glad to be here just now to help you. I can tell you a great deal that will comfort you, and plenty more that will surprise and amuse you very much. There are two sides to everything, even to things that vex one, I assure you! But, quiet!—quiet! dear friends, I do beg," continued he, as he heard more

plunging and shaking of halters, "or I shall not be able to say another word!"

"We will be quiet," cried the colts, for they liked the idea of being surprised and amused, as who does not?

Then Taffy told them they were not brought here to be teased to death, as they had perhaps supposed, but to prepare them for being taught a thousand nice things which they would never be able to do if they were not taught, and which it was immensely jolly to be able to do, when the teaching was once over; and he proceeded to hold forth on the pleasures of trotting, cantering, and galloping over the country, with a good feed of corn, a comfortable stable, and a valet to rub one down at the end; as also the delightful excitements of racing and hunting, which even he had enjoyed, though only as a looker on; but he added that they couldn't have a share in all this, without first learning to obey their masters, and love them a little bit too.

Whereupon both colts shuddered all over, for the fright of the men who had shut them up

was very great, and love seemed perfectly impossible.

"Ah! you can't bear the thought of this I see," cried Taffy. "Well, of course, if it could be, one would like to have no master but oneself—eh, my friends?"

To which both Whitefoot and Silverstar agreed, with a whinny of satisfaction.

"But what is the use of fretting oneself, by wishing for what can't be," pursued Taffy. "These men and women are, though I don't know how, or why, our masters and superiors, and I know from my own experience, that we are happiest when we submit to their wishes with a good grace; when we struggle and resist we are miserable."

"But suppose they wish something cruel and unjust?" sighed Silverstar.

"But who is to decide what is so?" asked Taffy in return. "Many things seem so that are not; your being here against your will for instance—you will be so glad about it by-and-by, when the teaching is finished."

"It is comfortable to hear that," murmured Silverstar.

"Is the teaching itself very unpleasant?" asked Whitefoot.

"*Very*," cried Taffy at once, at the mere recollection of it, and the colts shuddered again. "But here I am," he continued, "none the worse, and all the better, and as happy as possible, with a man or woman, or a little child on my back three or four times a week, and a pet with all the family. Oh! you have no notion how good-natured these men very often are—bringing one tit-bits both in the stable and field—bread, or apples, or carrots, or clover, which one takes out of their hands. But for pity's sake don't begin kicking again," cried he, as he heard them flinging wildly about, at the notion of men coming so near. "Why, you surely wouldn't kick at kindness? You must meet it half way, when it's offered, you foolish fellows, or you may live to want it before you die! But, don't alarm yourselves! You won't be able to be on these intimate terms with masters and superiors, till

How severe the trial must have been to them,
—must ever be to all !

Worse still, however, when in the course of a few days, the corners of the mouths became sore from the pressure of the iron, and there was, for a time, the pain of a raw wound, as well as a day-by-day longer time of restraint to endure. —Masters and superiors, verily, there is a great responsibility in your hands ! Nevertheless, it is not for the colts to sit in judgment.

Now then, how fared the three colts under the terrible but, at present, in some way or other, necessary training ? (For even Egeria could not answer Firefly's maddened inquiries, by saying that in the East the bit and bridle and whip can be dispensed with.) Well, Whitefoot and Silverstar set out by intending to submit if possible, and therefore, though more or less cheerfully at some times than others, and with more or less pain to themselves, they contrived to manage it at last.

Firefly, on the contrary, started by a sort of resistance-on-principle plan. Wishing to resist,

in fact, he always found a reason for resisting. If people treated him properly he could submit as well as any one else, he was sure ; but if they ill-used him, what could they expect but that he should kick—kick—kick ? And as to what proper treatment was, he made himself the sole judge. Certainly the training process just described was not proper, but on the contrary cruel and unjust, and accordingly kick, kick, kick he went, whenever it was possible.

In vain Egeria begged him to forbear, seeing too late how much mischief her folly had done.

"It is so senseless to resist when you can't help yourself," said she.

"It is so mean to yield to an unjust necessity!" cried he.

And she dared not contradict herself so far as to suggest, that it might not be so unjust as it seemed.

"Will you listen to me once more?" asked she, one day.

"If you talk sense, yes," replied Firefly, "not otherwise, old lady."

Egeria sighed ; for his pert folly was but a stretched-out shadow of her own. Imperfect judgments ; judgments formed on half-known grounds ; judgments formed by the lesser intelligence concerning a greater which it cannot comprehend—what rebellion and ruin have they not caused !

“It is sense, if you have sense to find it out,” cried Egeria, sharply. “It is downright wisdom. What I am going to say is truth and fact.”

“I hear you ; go on,” said Firefly, impatiently.

“Well, if you go on kicking in this manner, every time you think you have—I beg your pardon—every time you have a reason for kicking, you know, you will get into such a habit of kicking, that you will do it whether you have a reason or not.”

“Shall I !” shouted Firefly, with contempt.

“Yes, you *will* though !” persisted Egeria, vexed alike by his obstinacy and ridicule. “If you kick every time you can find or make an excuse, you will be very apt to kick on when you have none.”

"I have never yet kicked without a reason, old lady, and I don't intend to do so," answered Firefly.

"I know, I know," replied Egeria, "so far you have always proved yourself right *to yourself*: what the horsebreaker thinks is another matter. But, dear friend, try and believe me,—habits are such tremendous things! If you don't get into a habit of giving way, you mayn't be able to give way when you want, that's what I am afraid of. Those who indulge themselves in kicking at all, will sometimes kick when they would give worlds to forbear."

"How can that happen to me, when I never kick without a reason?" cried Firefly.

At which moment he was fetched from the stable for a morning's lesson, and Egeria was left to fret alone. For fret she did, not being a bad creature on the whole, but such an inconsiderate old simpleton, both in her way of viewing life and talking about it to others!

And alas! there was but too much cause for fretting, when at the end of five weeks Firefly

remained still untamed—still in the horse-breaker's hands ! A fortnight ago both White-foot and Silverstar had taken leave of the place, had finished their education with respectability, and gone out into the world on their own account. There are plenty of good masters to be found for docile, well-taught creatures, and they had been picked up at once by two neighbouring families, and often met in their rides, and talked over old times. Egeria heard of this from Taffy, who, from being constantly out, learnt all the news of the country-side, and had once or twice met his friends himself ; and it must be owned she regretted Firefly's conduct all the more, that she feared she had had some share in it herself.

When Firefly was led out of the stable after Egeria had spoken, he had, for a few minutes, a misgiving that there might be some truth in what she had said. But the first crack of the horsebreaker's whip made his heart as hard as ever. He had accustomed himself for so long to look upon it and him and the whole affair as a

system of barbarous injustice, that he could not have rid himself of the notion without a strong effort, and there was one great difficulty to his making it—namely, that he must acknowledge himself to have been in the wrong before. And alas! he did not make it; and so another week went on, at the end of which the horsebreaker lost patience, and told Firefly's owner he was a hopeless kicker, and a very ill-conditioned animal as to temper, though otherwise with many good points, and a valuable beast.

It was not very pleasant news to the owner, but Firefly was so handsome in appearance, and moreover, so strong and able to work, that he was undertaken at last by a very fearless young squire, who cared for little but pace and beauty, had a seat like a rock, put his faith in a strong curb, and had no scruple in using his spurs.

What Firefly underwent in his hands I do not wish to describe, though, even there, if he would but have submitted, his fate would not have been bad, for if the master loved galloping, so did Firefly himself. But again and again he would

refuse to obey the curb if it checked or turned him suddenly when his face was set elsewhere ; and then like an instinct came the impulse to kick, kick, kick ! and he followed it. For an hour sometimes the two would battle together—the spur and the whip and the curb, against that insane determination to kick, kick, kick ! And as to be conquered by main force and exhaustion is not to be reformed, Firefly was led away bleeding and foam-covered to his stable, as savage as when he left it, and still repeating the old strain, “If people treat me properly, I can submit as well as any one else ; but if they don’t, what can they expect but that I shall kick, kick, kick ?” Like the horsebreaker’s whim of driving him round in an everlasting circle, seemed the young squire’s whim of checking him, and turning him round when he didn’t expect it, and wanted to go straight on. He kicked, therefore, strictly on principle, and all the more when the injustice was enforced by the spur and the lash. So the squire got tired of his purchase, and Firefly was sold again.

But this time to a very knowing hand, a country doctor, who after trying different plans in turn—low feed and good feed, kindness and severity, and finding both unsuccessful, took him back to the horsebreaker. "He seems very hopeless at present," remarked he; "he kicks for nothing. But there is one more chance. Break him in for harness. Kicking-straps will perhaps bring him to his senses. At any rate try; he has many good qualities, and is a fine fellow. I hope he'll do well."

The horsebreaker shook his head, and led Firefly back to his old stable. Another colt occupied his former stall, but there were still two vacant. He was led into the middle one, and before nightfall Egeria was brought into the third.

Firefly told his story at length, and was too eager to hear Egeria's shuffles of impatience. "How unfortunate some people are!" observed she, when he ended; but there was a slight mockery in her tone.

"I have been so all along," said he; "I believe I am fated to ill-usage."

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"People always are who will go nobody's way but their own," was Egeria's answer; "why don't you do what is wanted? Go the way your master pulls you, and give up fighting for your own."

"If people treat me properly, I can submit—"

"Oh, do stop!" cried Egeria, "I've heard that much too often. You never *do* submit."

"Because they never—"

"Oh, they, they, they! Would they be masters, if you, and not they, were to lead the way?"

"Oh, as to *masters*, perhaps I have my own opinion," cried Firefly; "I wonder who has been master of the two *I* have had! But no matter about that. I could have borne leading, but I wouldn't be dragged. It was the curb and spurs and whip of that young squire I kicked against."

"And of your last master, the doctor, when he was kind?" asked Egeria.

"He wasn't always kind," muttered Firefly.

"But when he was?" insisted the old mare.

"Fool!" murmured Firefly, between his teeth; "was I likely to go his fidgetty way—stopping a'

one house, then at another ; no sooner started than having to stop ; twisted down one lane and up another, never having a good run all the time ; I, who had galloped over half a country-side in a morning with the squire ? Kick ! why who wouldn't kick at a life like that ? ”

“ It is as I feared,” exclaimed Egeria. “ Anybody who wants to kick, can find a reason for it, of course.” And she spoke not another word, for she did not understand the matter to the bottom, as Taffy did, and her way of argument was, therefore, not convincing.

The first thing in the morning, however, Firefly spoke to her. He had a question to ask. Did she know what *kicking-straps* were ? Perfectly ; what made him want to know ?

He repeated what the doctor had said.

“ Capital ! ” said Egeria. “ If you are put into those you will never be able to kick again.”

“ We shall see about that,” groaned Firefly, grinding his teeth as if he were champing oats.

“ Masters—masters—masters indeed ! . . . ”

In which state of mind he was taken out, two

hours afterwards, put into kicking-straps, and had his first lesson of going in harness. The plan answered at first; but this was only while the shock of surprise and helplessness lasted. Still, being rather less wild, the horsebreaker returned him as "fit for harness, if driven in kicking-straps;" and Egeria twitted him when he left her, as being "fairly caught at last." "We shall see about that," muttered Firefly, fuming to himself, as the doctor drove him home. But the kicking-straps were amazingly strong, and he restrained himself. Nevertheless, the first principles of submission had not entered his head, and Egeria's folly and ridicule had done all that an unwise friend could do to confuse the truth.

The truth? Ah, we can only get at that by sitting in our neighbour's chair, and looking with his eyes. Had Firefly done this, he would have known why the kicking-straps were added to his harness, and have laid the blame on the right shoulders. As it was, he laid the blame on the doctor, and considered himself the victim of injustice.



So, one unlucky day, after a round of rather tiresome visiting, a very slight correction for impatience, set his blood working ; and, without thinking either of kicking-straps or consequences, he took the bit between his teeth, laid his ears down, close to his head, muttering, "Masters, indeed!" to himself, and pulling madly at the reins, dashed at full speed down the narrow country-lane. They stopped him at last at a turnpike-gate, and as the kicking-straps had given way soon after he started, he concluded the day's work by smashing the splash-board to pieces, his master escaping with difficulty.

So he was sent back to the market-town, and resold.

It is impossible to pursue him through all his adventures ; they were all, so to speak, variations upon the same set of notes—the battle of authority with one who refused to acknowledge its claims. A miserable struggle, whether of man or beast ; whether against the powers ordained of God, or the God of power Himself.

whether breaking out into open contest, or indulged in by inward repining.

At last, poor Firefly fell into the hands of a regular horsedealer, who forwarded him to a neighbourhood where his tricks were not known, and after some weeks of low diet and constant work, sold him (more shame for the fact) to a quiet country clergyman, for a birthday present for his daughter, just bursting into the beauty of girlhood.

Now, by this time, our friend Firefly had had experience enough to discover that his habit of opposition was constantly bringing him into trouble. And though he was not sick of the bad habit, he was decidedly sick of the trouble, and every now and then was vexed with himself for giving way to it. And now and then he recalled Egeria's words, "Those who indulge themselves in kicking at all, will sometimes kick when they would give worlds to forbear." Still, he could not remember a single case in which he had kicked without a very good reason—as it seemed to him :—so he assured himself at least,

and tried to forget that Egeria had also said, "Anybody who wants to kick can find a reason for kicking, of course!"

Now at last, however, came Firefly's halcyon days. What more could heart of horse desire than to belong to a gentle young girl, who was ready to love him, not only as her servant but companion and friend? Egeria's tales of Eastern kindness came back to his mind again and again, as his new mistress brought him delicate morsels which she would fain have had him eat from her hand; and when, as was generally the case, he could not overcome his repugnance, but started back from her caresses, all she said was, the poor fellow was nervous and shy; perhaps—who knew?—he had at some time or other been harshly used.

"This is as it should be," remarked Firefly; and he began to think better than ever of himself. The few misgivings he had lately had went to sleep. "*I* was right, and not Egeria," thought he, as he bore his light burden over her favourite haunt, the Downs, "*I* was right, and Egeria

wrong. I told her I had never kicked without a reason, and never should. It was nonsense about not being able to leave off."

And so he really believed, till, alas! the renewed good living brought back the impatience as well as fire into his blood, and what had he to restrain them with, who had not got the law in his heart? There followed one other week of self-confidence and enjoyment, and then . . .

. . . She was not in the least to blame—that beautiful young girl who had been so kind to him. He admitted this even to himself, when he saw her stretched at his feet; the eyes that had looked so kindly at him, closed; the rich black hair surrounding the white cheeks and forehead like a pall—the groom so horror-struck when he came up, that he never thought of even laying hold on Firefly's bridle.

They had been out for a morning ride on the Downs, and she had wished to canter. For a day or two past, some evil spirit (evil spirits are so ingenious) had been whispering in his ear, that to be patronized was all very well, if it were



not another form of unjust restraint. Masters! had he not proved himself the master in every case yet? And so he had done here—here, where, as Egeria had prophesied, he would have given worlds to forbear. Now rose before him the only half-valued tenderness, the anxiety for his daily comfort, the little personal sacrifices in his favour, and this as the conclusion; that because the canter had been prolonged, and she had wished to rest, and so checked him with the bridle, the old habit had proved too strong for him, and prompted him to kick, kick, kick!—and he had kicked till she was stretched at his feet. . . .

More than an hour passed, and Firefly stood by her still. Stood in the same spot, seeing the same sight, without care to go his own way, now that he might have done it at will.

And then came the trampling of feet, horses and other men, and among them all a father in the first agony of despair. But no one noticed Firefly—he was nothing to his masters then, and so he stood on there like a horse of marble, in the same old place, looking at what he had done.

But presently some one who had been touching her wrist and had sprinkled her with water whispered "she is coming to herself!"

And it was true. Firefly's mistress had been stunned and one arm was hurt, but she awoke again to life; and when the poor father had wept out his joy on her neck, and she had looked up, she smiled to see so near them the creature who had caused this evil. Yes, there he stood, and his eye watched hers, as it first glanced at him, and then fixed on her father's face anxiously, while she murmured, "Promise me one thing, dear father. Let poor Firefly go to Rarey to be cured."

Masters?—*They* may well be masters and superiors, in whom the abiding spirit of forgiveness and love is triumphant! So Firefly was taken to Rarey; but what then happens to horses must be looked for in other books. This does not contain an argument on the merits of the different methods of horsebreaking; only thus much as regards Rarey's process is the turning point of the tale. The object aimed at is the



KICKING.

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subjection of the will, not merely the control of the body,—the full and complete recognition of the mastership and superiority of man. This, and this only, is what is wanted when the legs are tied up, and struggles rendered powerless by force, so that the indignant animal is brought through exhaustion of body to submission of feeling. He has plunged, he has kicked, he has reared, for hours together, if he will have it so ; but the man stands by him unscathed, unruffled, and still kind :—his master and superior—the terrible discipline proves it ; but still kind—and the kindness proves it too.

All this Firefly went through ; and when the Rarey-breaker “gentled” him all over his miserable frame, as he lay panting and overpowered on the sawdust, conquered and convinced at last, all his mistakes and misconceptions of other people came before him, as plainly as if Taffy himself had spoken them ; so plainly, that he wondered at himself. But remembering his old and all-too-firmly-adhered-to resolution to kick, kick, kick, whenever he was vexed, a fresh out-

break of perspiration astonished the breaker so much, that he "gentled" and soothed the troubled spirit more and more tenderly, till Firefly could think of nothing like it but the father and daughter comforting each other on the Downs, that terrible day of his guilt.

And thus at last, he learnt that it was possible for submission and love and happiness to go hand in hand together. Firefly was cured.

And then he was taken back to a home which he helped in his degree, however humble, to make what a home should be;—a circle in which animals, superior and inferior, should all work together, each after its measure and kind, for the comfort and pleasure of all.

At last, therefore, he gave a willing obedience to every touch of his dear young lady's rein; and yet he feared her no longer as before; and yet he loved her more! Which is a great mystery, but the world repeats it in a thousand forms.

Animals under man—servants under masters—children under parents—wives under husbands

—men under authorities—nations under rulers—
all under God,—it is the same with all:—in
obedience of will is the only true peace.

Happy the colts who learn submission without
a lifetime of personal struggle! Happy the men
and women who find in the lesser obediences a
practise-field of the greater; for assuredly the
words of Egeria are true: "Those who indulge
themselves in kicking at all, will sometimes kick
where they would give worlds to forbear."





IMPERFECT' INSTRUMENTS.







*"The Organ was not so perfectly in tune as
to please Geronimo's delicate ear."*

Imperfect Instrume



IMPERFECT INSTRUMENTS.

“ And others’ follies teach us not,
Nor much their wisdom teaches ;
And most, of sterling worth, is what
Our own experience preaches.”

TENNYSON.

OVER the old church-tower passed the rooks, on their way from the neighbouring trees, cawing into the fresh morning air as they went. Dew hung yet upon every stone of the building,—on the bits of moss and grass which time had suffered to creep over or between them, here and there,—on the edges of the tombs below. There was no one astir at this early hour of an autumn day to speak to or interrupt the dark-eyed Geronimo, as he strode hurriedly up the pathway to the



porch, the church-keys dangling from his hand, and slightly clanking against each other as he stepped.

Behind him followed a rough-haired country lad, but at a little distance, and silent. He had a stick in his hand, however, with which he began to whisk off the wet from the grass-blades of the graves on each side the path; but at one turn and glance from Geronimo, he desisted. Soon the key was in the lock, the bolt had turned, grating, back; the heavy door was pushed open, the shock echoing through the building; and Geronimo and little Roger, the mason's son, his companion, were walking up the aisle; on one side of which, at the upper end, in a small transept, stood the organ and choir-seats.

Let me recall that lonely village, nestling in a narrow valley on the borders of Southern Wales, traversed by a rapid streamlet, which ran through it like a silver thread; rich in orchards, embosomed in ancient trees, where rooks had built their nests for generations; where the cuckoo's voice reverberated from surrounding hills. At one

extremity was the church, at the other the quiet vicarage ; so that the flock were wont to watch about their doorways for the passing by of the Pastor to his sacred office, that they might follow and enter with him into the ark of the visible church on earth, he leading them on their way. It was a pretty custom and a pleasant sight ; there was a tone of loyal respect and trust about it, which social progress has, it is to be feared, some tendency to disturb.

Let me recall the old Pastor himself, in his happy, scholarly simplicity ; the serenity of submission on his face, for he had undergone a life's long grief. Let me recall him in the days when the time was drawing near for the silver cord to be broken, and when his visions brought him closer and closer to the day of reunion with his dearly-loved Italian wife, who had died when their only child, Geronimo, was but five years old.

And Geronimo was now his father's Curate ; a youth fresh from the schools ; energetic, enthusiastic, determined even to self-will, a worshipper

of system and order ; one who had taken for his motto the words of the poet :

“ —because right is right, to follow right
Were wisdom in the scorn of consequence.”

The father, on the other hand, past middle-age, was old for his years ; for the fire of his spirit had died out, but the power of his intellect remained unaltered, as is often the case in fine natures ; and an originally widely-educated judgment grew wider and gentler as the river of his life widened out to the everlasting sea. He doubted about his son's motto, therefore, as a universal rule of life. It had to be considered, said he, whether the “right” you followed, or the “consequence” you scorned, was of the greater vital importance. There was a right and a wrong—he once added as a homely illustration—in the way of cutting a pencil ; but if you had to deal with a weak-led one, which would not bear long shoulders without breaking, it was better to cut it with short shoulders than waste it altogether. If he had to choose a motto himself, it must be from the broader teaching of St. Paul.

Geronimo listened in impatience. He thought his father's argument a letting down of principle, the homely illustration trivial, and with regard to St. Paul, everybody knew that texts could be found to support almost anything.

It stood thus, then, that the father admired the son for his strength of purpose and purity of intention, yet sometimes wondered what his future would be ; but that the son never properly appreciated the father, except for his amiability to himself. He thought him a kind but feeble old man, behindhand in the lights of the day.

And it was true that while Geronimo had passed from school to college, his father had remained in the narrow valley ; and while the kaleidoscope of public opinion was presenting fresh combinations of thought and feeling to the gaze and admiration of the ardent young, the old man was out of the circle of their influence, and judged of them afar off with the mind of a philosopher.

It was, perhaps, a rash arrangement that Geronimo should have come to be his father's Curate ;

but he had made the offer, and the old man had accepted it with tears of joy. There was, in fact, between them a strong natural affection, overruling all theoretical differences of opinion, as well as a strong sense of parental and filial duty. There was also, perhaps, some hope on both sides of influencing each other for good; and there was, moreover, the unspoken bond of common interest in one grave.

The triangular white marble slab on the chancel-wall of the church bore upon it a name which to both father and son was still the dearest name upon earth, "Maria Maddalena:"—to the old man naturally so, who through so many years had lifted up weary, loving eyes to the golden letters in which it was traced, travelling in spirit to that heaven of heavens whither the taper central angle of the tablet continually pointed.

And the son had his own recollections—dim ones of old embraces from that mother who had so soon passed away—vivid ones of looking upwards to that tablet from his seat in church ever since he was a child—of gazing on the shining

words, and the shining emblems above them, the palm branches, the cross, and the star, until their glitter first dazzled and then brought tears to his eyes. Had he tried, by gazing, to get nearer to the bearer of that golden name—the mother, whom every motherless child feels to want so much? Had he hoped to charm her back, he knew not whence, to comfort him, he knew not how?

He could not have answered himself. Children do and feel many things of which they can give no account, and the why, matters so little in comparison with the fact.

Enough that the long-cherished habit of love to the pure white marble slab remained as firm in Geronimo's heart, as if he had been able to reason about its propriety, and justify it by argument.

Judge, then, what he must have suffered when, on his first coming to the place as curate, he felt it his duty to ask permission of his father to have that tablet removed to some other part of the church!

Let us go back to that time, some nine months

before that of my story, for it was the beginning of Geronimo's practical troubles.

It was a painful scene that took place; Geronimo's voice trembled as he made the request, and his father's heart-wrung "Never!" was followed by a silence equally distressing to both. Then the old man asked for reasons, and the young one gave them. The kaleidoscope had brought certain proprieties into full observation which had for some time been unnoticed—there was no doubt about that. The tablet was on a wall within the communion rails; it would have been better elsewhere. Private memorials were inappropriate there. Geronimo thought them inappropriate in the church anywhere—the father disputed this—it was the ark of the dead as well as of the living; but were the matter to be done over again, he would place the stone without the rails in preference; as it was, there was no vital principle involved—no sufficient reason, therefore, for the desecrating act of removal.

The son returned to the argument. His father had admitted the objection; was it not

then clearly an act of duty to sacrifice personal feeling to the example of right—whether the right were small or great?

“Measure me the measure of the right,” cried the troubled father, “as compared with the impressions it will cause. You cannot drive straight lines through life without knocking over good feelings as well as bad ones, and woe to those who knock down what little there is of good in the world!”

“The right way is a narrow way,” replied the son; “to trim to the prejudices of the ignorant is to sacrifice principle to man-pleasing.” There was more said in the shape of argument than needs to be repeated here—let every one fight the matter out as he will. On the following day, the father had come to a resolution.

“When I am gone,” said he to his son, “and my name is added to hers on the tablet, you may remove it to where you will; and even now, if, on hearing this, you remain offended, you may remove it at once. I warn you, however, that it is my belief your doing so will cause evil rather

than good among those whose souls' health you are bound to consider. You cannot get them to understand your motives, and they will abominate the act. What you lose will be far more, therefore, than what you will gain. Of my personal feelings I say nothing. On that point I suspect we suffer together. Now, then, do as you please."

If the father hoped, by yielding a point so trying to himself, to set Geronimo an example of giving way, he deceived himself. Geronimo did not accept what he said as an example, but as an acknowledgment of an error that needed rectifying. About any consequences to other people he refused to think at all. Consequences were nothing in matters of duty and principle.

So he went to Roger, the village-mason, explained what he wanted, and gave his orders, announcing his intention of coming himself to assist. But the man stared in astonishment. "You ben't in earnest surely, sir?" said he. "Surely you're never going to pull down your own mother's tombstone? Why, it'll break the

old gentleman's heart—and she such a woman as she was !”

“My father has given his consent,” said Geronimo, annoyed, but not betraying the smallest impatience.

Roger the mason shook his head, and took up a tool he had laid down, as if intending to return to his work.

“You’ll excuse me, Mr. Geronimo; you’ve, maybe, persuaded him to it. Young people will be young people, I know,” remarked Roger; “though it’s a downright miracle to me why *you* should want to do it—you, the lady’s only son; and such a lady as she was !”

“It’s out of no disrespect to my mother, I assure you,” expostulated Geronimo.

“I should think not, indeed !” interrupted the mason.

“But,” continued Geronimo, “we have all to sacrifice personal feelings, you know, in matters of right and wrong.”

Geronimo paused; but the mason was silent—he had no idea what was meant.

"Or where there is a question of propriety in treatment of holy places," continued the young man, but still the mason stared at him in silence.

"You don't understand me, I think," Geronimo.

"I'm free to own I don't," answered the mason.

"Will you let me come in and explain myself," asked the young man.

"Your father's son is welcome in *my* house any time!" cried Roger, who had at last got hold of an idea he could fully understand; and leading the way along a narrow passage, he ushered his guest into a small parlour, to which he presently called his wife down, having asked permission for her to share in what Mr. Geronimo was going to say.

But let Mr. Geronimo say what he would, neither of his hearers succeeded in comprehending him, though, to do them justice, they tried. There they sat, the mason holding his cap in both hands between his knees, slightly stooping, looking up at Geronimo from time to time.

his wife bolt upright, and never taking her eyes off him for a second. And still they didn't understand ! They had two or three ideas of their own in their heads, it is true, which were adverse to Mr. Geronimo's arguments, and perhaps darkened their powers of comprehension. "The Mrs.," as they called her, had been an angel on earth, if ever there was one, and no place could be too good for her stone, they were sure, for wasn't she herself in heaven ?—at least, who would ever get there if she wasn't there ? And the poor dear gentleman had stood under it every Sunday ever since she was taken, and who'd have the heart to deprive him of the comfort of feeling her so near ? If that stone were to be taken away, they shouldn't have *him* there much longer—Mr. Geronimo might depend upon that ! Roger's good woman declared she wouldn't see the poor old gentleman standing there alone, as if he'd never had a wife, for all the world, if she could help it.—Take down his own mother's tombstone ! as if her name wasn't a credit anywhere, and a good example into the bargain,—Mr. Geronimo couldn't

be thinking of what he was saying ! And Roger protested that if he never had another job in all his life, he wouldn't have this. But Mr. Geronimo was young, put in the wife, and hadn't come to his feelings ; he would think better of it presently. They wished him a very good morning, and hoped he would call again.

Mr. Geronimo bit his lips as he left the house. Learning ! — authority ! — what had become of them ? What had he done with them ? What could he have done with them against such stolid country heads ? Entirely spoilt into the bargain, thought he—the fruit of taking things easy. There was but one hope of cure—to go the way you thought right, and leave such people to get reconciled to it as they could. Explanation and reasoning !—he was ashamed of having tried them. The people had treated him like a child.

So he crossed the hills next morning, and rode ten miles, to the nearest town, where he engaged a marble-mason to come over and remove the tablet. But Sunday intervened, and as it chanced his father was ill, and he had to stand in his place

under the tablet in the chancel. And all at once, while there, there flashed into his mind one, at any rate, of the words which Roger the mason had spoken—quite an unreasonable word, be it granted, but reason, even in the most reasoning men, is not always a match for feeling, and Geronimo was suddenly unnerved. The Gospel for the day contained the brief, pathetic history of the widow of Nain; and crossed as all the incidents were,—for *he* was the only son of a yet living father, and it was the mother who was dead—every word seemed to touch his case, and he had a sensation as if the Maria Maddalena of his childhood was looking down over his head from the tablet he was preparing to remove. He actually shuddered. What if his father were about to die too?

Yet, what really overwhelmed him, little as he knew it, was the contrast which made itself felt between the hardness of his own attempted system and the sympathy which breathed out of the Gospel page. The Saviour had driven the money-changers from the temple, it is true, with the hand of indignant power; but there was no

question of the world's vile desecrating traffic in that still marble monument on the wall. Geronimo did not think it all out then, nor till long afterwards, but in steeling himself to set a point of—let it be granted—ecclesiastical propriety above the much weightier matter of human sympathy, and a regard for moral results on others, he had followed the Pharisees of old, rather than Him who imposed none but necessary burdens on the tremulous human mind.

Nevertheless his resolution had received a shock, and he was up betimes next morning to meet the marble-mason on his way. He had altered his intentions, he told him, with respect to the tablet, but there was another little matter of restoration in the church which he wished him to undertake. And now Geronimo breathed freely again, and met his father at breakfast with an easy mind. He therefore spoke quite cheerfully of the proposed restoration of a Knight Templar's tomb, which had long been in disorder, and alluded to the marble-mason from the town as being there.

A cry from his father interrupted him.

"Geronimo!—that marble-mason!—have you really had the heart to—" Here breath failed the old man, and he turned very pale.

"No, no!" cried Geronimo, passionately, for he knew what was meant.

"It is well," murmured the father. "I gave you leave, I know; but, Geronimo, I doubt if I could have borne it. One gets weaker as one gets older; and, with weak people as with ignorant ones, the grasshopper is sometimes a burden."

If Geronimo could but have recollected this! But he had seen so little of life and the world himself, that he could scarcely help being one-sided and narrow-minded; and as he would not avail himself of his father's wider knowledge, what remained but to make mistakes?

So, priding himself on an inflexible firmness in matters of "principle," however small, he confounded together things indifferent and important; did even wise ones foolishly; and attempted others which were neither wise, nor worth a hundredth part of the offence they created.

"We are to 'be hated of all men for His name's sake,'" quoted he, in justification of the course he was pursuing.

"His name's sake!" I dare not record the trivialities he dignified upon that sacred ground.

But on one or two points the father interfered authoritatively, and then domestic disagreement arose. Now Geronimo had thought scorn of Roger the mason for not yielding to his better knowledge and authoritative position, as a matter of course. Yet here, where to the counsellor was added father as well as priest, and to the knowledge of the schools the broader experiences of a long and varied life, it came quite natural to this mere lad by comparison, to think, and betray the thought, that he knew a thousand times the better of the two. Verily, if a little of the old heathen respect for the wisdom of grey hairs had been added to his theological dogmas, Geronimo's Christianity would not have suffered.

"And a man's foes shall be they of his own household," murmured the old man to himself in the bitterness of his heart, as he wended

whether it would not soon be his duty to send this his only son from his side. For how could he be justified in letting the clouds of miserable parties and party feelings gather into a storm ?

But now Geronimo, too, awoke to the fact that such a storm threatened. The gossip spread on every side that father and son did not always agree, and the flock were not likely to be unanimous. The wicked natural man loves contest ; the weak natural man loves excitement. An expression of partizanship to himself, coupled with disrespect for his father, awoke Geronimo to a sense of his position, if it did not explain his mistake. And on looking further round, his tender conscience was grieved. The old confidence was broken up, the old love was failing—whether with or without a reason was not the question now. What could be the cause ? What was the remedy ? Perhaps he had been too busy with his plans and changes to have made himself as much a personal friend as was desirable. He redoubled his exertions and visits, endeavoured to conciliate on all sides ; but, somehow, some-

thing was wanting. If from long habit a good many still came out to follow himself and his father to church, they did so at a greater and greater distance. Only a few came up now to claim the friendly greeting, which he remembered as part of the Sunday's intercourse in the days of his childhood. Geronimo was puzzled.

Yet, if the kaleidoscope had but turned round for contemplation that crystal from the wisdom of St. Paul, "Destroy not him with thy meat for whom Christ died," he would have known the cause of estrangement, and how to apply a cure. As it was, an idea at once bright and kind struck him, and he lost no time in carrying it out with zeal.

Geronimo was musical—he had been so from childhood upwards—had introduced better music as well as greater beauty into the venerable old church; and for both these things the people were grateful, as they ought to be.

He would make use of this happily universal feeling; he would give a treat to high and low—would have a festival; they should keep holiday

with singing and gladness and feasting ; and the day should be his father's birthday. He would dispel the dreadful and mischievous idea that the house to which all the parish looked for example, was divided against itself !

Never was a happier thought struck out ! It furnished occupation for hearts, and minds, and hands ; and the old folks, who could do nothing but talk, had a harmless subject of conversation. "Eh dear, then, Mr. Geronimo and his father were as friendly as ever ! It had all been a mistake about their not agreeing. Eh, how pleased the old gentleman looked, to be sure, when he called, here and there, to ask them if they were going to get ready ! Why, he was helping everybody to trim themselves up in their best for the grand supper there was to be at the end. And on the old gentleman's birthday, and all ! It *was* something to think of ! They *were* glad !

And so they were ; but so also, only more deeply so, were father and son, for they felt reunited.

And now the time drew near, and only one small contradiction had arisen. The organ was

not so perfectly in tune as to please Gerónimo's delicate ear; and when, nearly at the last moment, he wrote over for the one organ-builder of the distant town, he found, to his dismay, that the man was absent, and would be so till the day after the festival.

The evil was slight, and the father entreated Geronimo to be satisfied: so few would discover the imperfection. But Geronimo could not rest; his passionate love of order was offended; and it must be owned that the instinct is a good one. "In the beginning," the will of God brought an organized world out of elemental confusion. In the end, we hope He will bring harmony into the discordant world of spirits. And in the present life men may, each one in his degree, labour to the same good end. It is both their privilege and their duty to do so. Lawyers, physicians, statesmen, men of science, and, above all, divines, undertake to do it by their very professions. Entangled claims, diseased bodies, disturbed nations, complicated physical laws and distressed souls, all need the peace that

comes with being ordered aright. In Geronimo, the instinct was almost a passion ; but of the judicious application of means to the blessed end, he did not know a great deal more than of how to bring the organ of the village church into the desired perfection of tune.

Nevertheless, he knew something of that, for he had been present when the organ-builder had tuned the instrument before, had observed the process of widening or narrowing the mouths of the pipes in order to change their tone, and had since ventured on correcting a defective note or two himself. What was to hinder him from tuning the whole of them now, if he could but ascertain the order in which the guiding scale of notes was made perfect ? To bring all the rest into unison with that, would be no difficulty, for he could perfectly trust his ear. The difficulty was, to get at the first principles of the matter. The youth who played the organ when Geronimo's duties precluded his assistance, knew nothing of the subject.

But Geronimo would not be baffled. The day

before the festival he crossed the hills to the town, and called at a musical instrument-maker's shop. Could they give him, he asked, the succession of notes by which organs were tuned?

Mr. Somebody asked Mr. Somebody-else, and there was a reference to an authority through a door. The shopman, who was left behind, eyed Geronimo askance. Was he in their line of business? he wondered. Presently the other man returned, and presented him with a bit of music-paper, on which twenty notes were marked down.

"These are the notes, sir," said he, rather coolly, as if he, too, half suspected a rival; "the same as for a pianoforte—as, of course, you know," he added, with a half-inquiring look.

Geronimo disliked familiarity, and gave a half-impatient nod.

"Mr. — desired me to say, with his compliments, sir," continued the messenger, "he supposed you're aware it's a difficult business, organ-tuning, to anyone that hasn't practised it."

"Has *your* master practised it?" inquired Geronimo, with a new hope.

"Oh, no, sir," replied the man, who himself did duty as master on the other side of the door; "we're pianoforte-tuners only, sir."

"What does the fool mean?" thought Geronimo, as he walked away. "A difficult business it may be to a man without an ear, but easy enough otherwise, with the clue in his hand. Thank Heaven, there is the comfort of certainty in dealing with material things! Fixed laws, and fixed results! Not that everlasting trimming and yielding, which leave every work one undertakes imperfect at last!"

As Geronimo mused thus, and read over the clearly-defined system by which his organ was to be brought into that harmonious order which we call "*being in tune*," he almost felt that an organ-builder's business was a more satisfactory one than a clergyman's.

There was still the little brass cone, used for widening or contracting the pipes, to be obtained; but this he asked for at the organ-builder's establishment—no remark passing there on what it was wanted for; and then Geronimo hurried home.

And now it will be understood what took the young curate to the church so early, on the morning of that autumn festival-day. He had begun, but not nearly completed, the tuning of the organ the evening before, having gone to it as soon as he could make an excuse to leave his father again; for the bold feat was to be kept secret till its successful accomplishment proved how wisely it had been undertaken. And now it must be finished before breakfast; for the decorations were to be brought in afterwards, and he himself had a thousand other things to do.

For two hours and upwards, therefore, did he persevere in his anxious work; his greatest trouble being the special care required in the mechanical part, inasmuch as a hasty or too heavy insertion of the cone into the mouths of the pipes was liable to split the metal and do mischief. But Geronimo kept every faculty on the full stretch of attention, and his perfect ear made the bringing of the notes into correct harmony a matter of no trouble at all, but, on

the contrary, of the keenest pleasure. And the instrument was more glaringly out of order than he had supposed. His father had fancied it was only a little out of tune, and he himself had not thought the disorder very great. But now that he tested it by the scale, almost every note was wrong, and must be altered. A few of the octaves harmonized together, it was true; but all the fifths were either too flat or too sharp.—That not one should have remained perfect by accident, as several of the octaves had done, puzzled him not a little; but the fact of their all being imperfect, more or less, was undeniable.—What a blessing he had it in his power to remedy the evil!

Yes; for two hours and upwards did the work go on; the occasional drone of the pipes vibrating drearily through the aisles, and almost causing little Roger to fall asleep at his post of blower. At last, however, every octave had been gone through, had been brought into perfect unison with the perfected scale of the twenty notes, and Geronimo's labours were over!

"Roger," cried he, to the child, whose blowing efforts were perceptibly failing.

"Yes, sir !"

"Blow steadily and strongly now, for ten minutes more, and you shall go home to break-fast. Fill the bellows, there's a good lad."

Roger worked his arms vigorously, and the bellows were soon full.

"It's all right now, please, sir," said he.

Geronimo had his eyes on a piece of music open on the desk before him. It was Hadyn's Mass, in five flats—his dream of beauty among all the classical music of the world. As Roger spoke, the young curate bent forward, and struck down the full magnificent chords of the key.

But almost as he struck them, he uttered a cry, which it was well the louder organ sounds drowned, or Roger would have thought Geronimo mad—a cry of both despair and physical distress. As it was, something startled the lad, and he let go the blowing-handle with a jerk. It ran up at once, and the organ notes died out in a mournful squeal.

As to Geronimo, it would be difficult to describe what he did. He was off the stool in an instant, shouting to Roger to know if he had broken the bellows ; then back again to retouch the expiring notes, and see if he had been under a delusion, or if he had struck the instrument at random. But no, no, no ! Then how—by what miracle—could he account for the fact that his touch upon that chord had filled the air with dissonant vibrations—horrible to the most untutored ear, but to his refined one absolutely insufferable ? Chord indeed ! the very word was a mockery ; what he had struck was a clash of discords.

Human nature itself had never puzzled Geronimo half as much !

After the first agony was over, he examined the matter with all the calmness and care he could command—made Roger blow again—tried other chords in succession—but in all cases with the same result, in a greater or less degree. Once more, then, he got out the tuning-scale—once more ran over the guiding twenty notes : there was not a single flaw, not one ; not a varying vibration could

be heard ; and all the others were in unison with those. And then again he struck a chord, and the chord was no chord at all. He next examined the pipes : perhaps he had cracked all their mouths with his cone. But no, there was not a split in any one of them ; he had been far too careful for that. And now time was getting on, and Roger was half starved. A knocking had already been heard at one of the doors. The decorators must be let in, and he must go home to his breakfast and his father. Geronimo's face, as he locked up the organ and put the keys in his pocket, looked ten years older than it had done before he began his work. He gave Roger half a crown, as a treat for the day, and hastened home.

It is difficult to reckon on the conduct of any one under the trial of having made a great mistake. Some people fight meanly to get out of a little fault, as if self-conceit was the leading principle of their lives, but humble themselves nobly under a great one ; and this was the case Geronimo. He went at once to his father,

and told him all he had done, blaming himself more bitterly than his father would allow he deserved. But he did more than that ; he stepped into many houses that morning, both of farmers and shopkeepers, and told them they must forgive him for being the cause of what he feared would be a great disappointment. He had wanted to make the organ better, and he had, unfortunately, done something to it which had made it worse ; and as he could not find out what was amiss, it couldn't be remedied. He would get the choir to make amends by singing their very best, and he would help them all he could himself. He begged that the blunder might not be allowed to spoil the pleasure of the day.

Unaccountable human race ! we ought indeed to be patient, one with the other ! Geronimo had not received so many smiles in all the time he had been curate as now, when he was carrying round the painful message of his own defeat.

It was wonderful ! Kind words were on every lip ; not a reproach was heard.—It had been so good of Mr. Geronimo to try.—They were so sure

it couldn't have been his fault, but something that had gone wrong of itself.—Any how, they didn't mind at all, and hoped he wouldn't trouble himself.—They should hear him sing all the plainer for there being no music besides ; and, as for that piece the old Master had talked about so much, they hoped he'd be so good as to play it to them some other day.—They begged *he* wouldn't mind—that was all !

Geronimo felt crowned with roses, for his frankness, if not for the error he had committed ; and service, feast, and festival, were kept with unclouded comfort, bringing a promise of further comfort in store—a better understanding of what was meant on all sides.

And now for the explanation. Neither father nor son could unravel the mystery. The only guess even that they could make was, that the man at the music-shop might have given them a wrong scale to work by. It was not a bad idea, and it served to keep them quiet till the organ-builder, whom they had sent for at once, came.

He was an odd, sententious old man, with

a good deal of dry humour. So when he got into the church and touched the fatal organ, he first chuckled and then laughed outright.

Were the bellows out of order? Were the pipes injured? Was the scale incorrect? Was the tuning imperfect? Geronimo's questions fell thick and fast.

"Nothing of the sort, young gentleman," said the organ-builder to every suggestion. "There's only one thing the matter—but it's everything—the tuning's *too perfect by half!*"

Both Geronimo and his father stared, to the organ-builder's great delight.

"You don't seem to have heard of this before, gentlemen," observed he; "but it's a fact, nevertheless. The scale's all right; the system's perfect; but if you stick too close to it, it sets you wrong. The organ won't bear it, that's the fact."

"Not bear being put into perfect tune?" asked Geronimo, really astonished. "How is that possible?"

"Because it's an imperfect instrument, sir,"

answered the organ-builder; "and that being the case, you have to make the best you can of it, and not try to get it perfect, for that's not possible."

Here he took up the scale paper, and went on to explain that most of the fifths must be left somewhat flat, and the few others made somewhat sharp; the octaves alone being tuned in perfect unison. And this was the best plan, he assured them, of getting a harmonious whole—"not perfect, I grant, even then," added he, "but pretty fair for this present life, gentlemen, you see."

Geronimo listened in silence. A system of expediency in the material world, and in music especially, seemed to him monstrous. He sat silently by, too, while the organ-builder made his preparations for repairing the mischief that had been done. His father slipt away, as silent as himself, though possibly he made his own reflections before he went.

But Geronimo sat silently on, till at last the organ-builder began to tune the fifths, leaving each one flat in succession; and then he could

contain himself no longer. He got up, but only to sit down again, and then rose once more.

"This is most trying!" he exclaimed. "As unsatisfactory to the mind as the ear! To have a perfect system to go by" (here he pointed to the scale of twenty notes) "and not be allowed to carry it perfectly out, though ear and heart rebel against the disorder! To have an evil under your very hand to be remedied, and be obliged to suffer it still. I call this dreadful!"

The organ-builder stopped his work, to listen and reply:—

"It's not very pleasant, I admit," said he, "but there's one thing's worse—to find you've worked so hard for the system, that you've missed the end it was made for."

"A perfect system ought to work out a perfect end," murmured Geronimo.

But the organ-builder shook his head. "Not if the instrument isn't perfect too," persisted he; "there's sure to be a cross somewhere."

Drone went another pipe, another imperfect fifth was tuned, and the organ-builder made

another pause. He was a very sententious man, and liked to explain all round his subject.

"It's the same all through life," observed he ; "the best rules even, short of Gospel rules, of course, mustn't be pressed too close ; neither man nor organ can bear it. If we were all up in heaven it might be different."

In spite of himself Geronimo smiled, and the smile did him good. "What a choice of evils !" said he.

"Can't be otherwise," remarked his companion, "so long as things are all imperfect together—men and organs—and perhaps even rules too, sometimes."

Geronimo shook his head, but the organ-builder did not notice it, and went back to his tuning as cheerful as if no such thing as a sad necessity existed in the world. And Geronimo went on listening to the unsatisfactory sounds, musing the while thereupon.

... Irregularity — inconsistency — contradictions even,—were as rife then in the material world as in the spiritual—must be borne with—

allowed for—made the best of—in the one case as in the other. The organ-builder's business was not so much more satisfactory than a clergyman's, after all ! . . .

"Now, sir, you may play Hadyn's Mass in five flats for as long as you please," observed the organ-builder, as he concluded the tuning, striking down the full chord of the key in proof of the fact: "The organ goes sweetly enough now."

And so it did—"sweetly enough," if not as perfectly as Geronimo could have desired ; but he had had his lesson, and must henceforth be contented with something short of his ideal.

"That type of Perfect in his mind,
For Nature can he nowhere find."

Nowhere in the lower nature, at least ; and for the full development of the higher, he must wait in patience. But patience is the philosophy of experience : and even Geronimo attained it at last.



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COBWEBS.

[REDACTED]

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COBWEBS.

" I cannot make this matter plain,
But I would shoot, howe'er in vain,
A random arrow from the brain."

TENNYSON.

TWINETTE the Spider was young, hungry, and industrious. "Weave yourself a web, my dear," said her mother, "as you know how without teaching, and catch flies for yourself; only don't weave near me in the corner here. I am old, and stay in the corners; but you are young, and needn't. Besides, you would be in my way. Scramble along the rafters to a little distance off, and spin. But mind! just see there's nothing there—below you I mean—before you

begin. You won't catch anything to eat, if there isn't empty space about you for the flies to fly in."

Twinette was dutiful, and obeyed. She scrambled along the woodwork of the groined roof of the church—for it was there her mother lived—till she had gone what she thought might fairly be called a little distance off, and then she stopped to look round, which, considering that as she had eight eyes to do it with, was not difficult. But she was not so sure of what there might be below.

"I wonder whether mother would say there was nothing here—below me, I mean—but empty space for flies to fly in?" said she.

But she might have stood wondering there for ever. So she went back to her mother, and asked what she thought.

"Oh dear, oh dear!" said her mother, "how can I think about what I don't see? There usen't to be anything there in my young days, I'm sure. But everybody must find out things for themselves. Let yourself down by the family

rope, as you know how, without teaching, and see for yourself if there's anything there or not."

Twinette was a very intelligent young spider, quite worthy of the age she was born in ; so she thanked her mother for her advice, and was just starting afresh, when another thought struck her. "How shall I know if there's anything there when I get there ?" asked she.

"Dear me, if there's anything there, how can you help seeing it?" cried the mother, rather teased by her daughter's inquiring spirit, "you with at least eight eyes in your head !"

"Thank you. Now I quite understand," said Twinette ; and scuttling back to the end of the rafter, she began to prepare the family rope.

It was the most exquisite thing in the world—so fine, it was scarcely visible ; so elastic, it could be blown about without breaking ; such a perfect grey that it looked white against black things, and black against white ; so manageable that Twinette could both make it, and slide down by it at once ; and when she wished to get

back, could slip up by it, and roll it up at the same time !

It was a wonderful rope for anybody to make without teaching. But Twinette was not conceited. Rope-making came as natural to her as eating and fighting do to intelligent little boys, so she thought no more about it than we do of chewing our food.

How she did it is another question, and one not easily answered, however intelligent we may be. Thus much may be hinted :—Out of four little spinning machines near the tail came four little threads, and the rope was a four-twist of these. But as each separate thread was itself a many-twist of a great many others, still finer, I do not pretend to tell the number of strands (as rope-threads are called) in Twinette's family rope. Enough, that as she made it now, it has been made from generation to generation, and there seems to be no immediate prospect of a change.

The plan was for the spinner to glue the ends
the rafter, and then start off. Then out came

the threads from the spinning-machines, and twist went the rope; and the further the spinner travelled, the longer the rope became.

And Twinette made ready accordingly, and turning on her back, let herself fairly off.

The glued ends held fast, the four strands twined closely together, and down went the family rope, with Twinette at the end, guiding it. Down into the middle of the chancel, where there were carved oaken screens on three sides, and carved oaken seats below, with carved oaken figures at each end of each.

Twinette was about halfway down to the stone-flagged floor, when she shut up the spinning machines, and stopped to rest and look round. Then, balancing herself at the end of her rope, with her legs crumpled up round her, she made her remarks.

"This is charming!" cried she. "One had need to travel and see the world. And all's so nice in the middle here. Nice empty space for the flies to fly about in; and a very pleasant time they must have of it! Dear me, ho

hungry I feel—I must go back and weave at once.”

But just as she was preparing to roll up the rope and be off, a ray of sunshine, streaming through one of the chancel windows, struck in a direct line upon her suspended body, quite startling her with the dazzle of its brightness. Everything seemed in a blaze all round her, and she turned round and round in terror.

“Oh dear, oh dear, oh dear!” cried she, for she didn’t know what to say, and still couldn’t help calling out. Then, making a great effort, she gave one hearty spring, and, blinded though she was, shot up to the groined roof, as fast as spider could go, rolling the rope into a ball as she went. After which she stopped to complain.

But it is dull work complaining to oneself, so she soon ran back to her mother in the corner.

“Back again so soon, my dear?” asked the old lady, not over-pleased at the fresh disturbance.

“Back again at all is the wonder,” whimpered

Twinette. "There's something down there, after all, besides empty space."

"Why, what did you see?" asked her mother.

"Nothing; that was just it," answered Twinette. "I could see nothing for dazzle and blaze; but I did see dazzle and blaze."

"Young people of the present day are very troublesome with their observations," remarked the mother; "however, if one rule will not do, here is another. Did dazzle and blaze shove you out of your place, my dear?"

Twinette said, "Certainly not—she had come away of herself."

"Then how could they be anything?" asked her mother. "Two things could not be in one place at the same time. Let Twinette try to get into her place, while she was there herself, and see if she could."

Twinette did not try, because she knew she couldn't, but she sat very silent, wondering what dazzle and blaze could be, if they were nothing at all! a puzzle which might have lasted her for ever. Fortunately her mother interrupted her,

by advising her to go and get something to do. She really couldn't afford to feed her out of *her* web any longer, she said.

"If dazzle and blaze kill me, you'll be sorry mother," said Twinette, in a pet.

"Nonsense, about dazzle and blaze," cried the old spider, now thoroughly roused. "I dare say they're only a little more light than usual. There's more or less light up here in the corners even, at times. You talk nonsense, my dear."

So Twinette scuttled off in silence ; for she dared not ask what light was, though she wanted to know.

But she felt too cross to begin to spin. She preferred a search after truth to her dinner, which showed she was no commonplace spider. So she resolved to go down below in another place and see if she could find a really empty space ; and accordingly prepared the family rope.

When she came down, it was about half a foot further east in the chancel, and a very prosperous journey she made. "Come ! all's safe so far," said she, her good humour returning. "I do

believe I've found nothing at last. How jolly it is!" As she spoke, she hung dangling at the end of her rope, back downwards, her legs tucked up round her as before, in perfect enjoyment, when, suddenly, the south door of the church was thrown open, and a strong gust set in. It was a windy evening, and the draught that poured into the chancel blew the family rope, with Twinette at the end of it, backwards and forwards through the air, till she turned quite giddy.

"Oh dear, oh dear!" puffing, "what shall I do! How could they say there was nothing here—oh dear!—but empty space for flies—oh dear—to fly in?" But at last, in despair, she made an effort of resistance, and, in the very teeth of the wind, succeeded in coiling up the family rope, and so got back to the rafters.

It was a piece of rare good fortune for her that a lazy, half-alive fly happened to be creeping along it just at the moment. As she landed from her air-dive she pounced on the stroller, killed him, and sucked his juices before he knew where

he was, as people say. Then, throwing down his carcass, she scrambled back to her mother, and told her what she thought, though not in plain words. For what she thought was that the old lady didn't know what she was saying, when she talked about empty space with nothing in it.

"Dazzle and blaze were nothing," cried she at last, "though they blinded me because they and I were in one place together, which couldn't be if they'd been anything; and now this is nothing, though it blows me out my place twenty times in a minute, because I can't see it. What's the use of rules one can't go by, mother? I don't believe you know a quarter of what's down below there."

The old spider's head had turned as giddy with Twinette's arguments as Twinette's had done while swinging in the wind.

"I don't see what it can matter what's there," whispered she, "if there's room for flies to fly about in. I wish you'd go back and spin."

"That's another part of the question," remarked Twinette, in answer to the first half of

her mother's sentence. In answer to the second she scuttled back to the rafter, intending to be obedient and spin. But she dawdled and thought, and thought and dawdled, till the day was nearly over.

"I will take one more turn down below," said she to herself at last, "and look round me again."

And so she did, but went further down than before; then stopped to rest as usual. Presently, as she hung dangling in the air by her line, she grew venturesome. "I will sift the matter to the bottom," thought she. "I will see how far empty space goes." So saying she re-opened her spinning-machines and started afresh.

It was a wonderful rope, certainly, or it would not have gone on to such a length without breaking. In a few seconds Twinette was on the cold stone pavement. But she didn't like the feel of it at all, so took to running as fast as she could go, and luckily met with a step of woodwork on one side. Up this she hurried at once, and crept into a corner close by, where she stopped

to take breath. "One doesn't know what to expect in such queer outlandish places," observed she; "when I've rested I'll go back, but I must wait till I can see a little better."

Seeing a little better was out of the question, however, for night was coming on, and when, weary of waiting, she stepped out of her hiding-place to look round, the whole church was in darkness.

Now it is one thing to be snug in bed when it is dark, and another to be a long way from home and have lost your way, and not know what may happen to you next minute. Twinette had often been in the dark corner with her mother, and thought nothing of it. Now she shook all over with fright, and wondered what dreadful thing darkness could be.

Then she thought of her mother's rules, and felt quite angry.

"I can't see anything and I don't feel anything," murmured she, "and yet here's something that frightens me out of my wits."

At last her very fright made her bold. She

felt about for the family rope ; it was there safe and sound, and she made a spring. Roll went the rope, and up went its owner ; higher, higher, higher, through the dark night air ; seeing nothing, hearing nothing, feeling nothing but the desperate fear within. By the time she touched the rafter she was half-exhausted ; and as soon as she was safely landed upon it, she fell asleep.

It must have been late next morning when she woke, for the sound of organ music was pealing through the church, and the air-vibrations swept pleasantly over her frame ; rising and falling like gusts of night, swelling and sinking like waves of the sea, gathering and dispersing like vapours of the sky.

She went down by the family rope to observe, but nothing was to be seen to account for her sensations. Fresh ones, however, stole round her, as she hung suspended, for it was a harvest-festival, and large white lilies were grouped with evergreens round the slender pillars of the screens, and filled the air with their powerful

odour. Still, nothing disturbed her from her place. Sunshine streamed in through the windows—she even felt it warm on her body—but it interfered with nothing else ; and, meanwhile, in such sort as spiders hear, she heard music and prayer—whether as music and prayer come to us, or as deaf men enjoy sound by touch, let those say who can ! A door opened, and a breeze caught her rope ; but still she held fast. So music and prayer and sunshine and breeze and scent were all there together ; and Twinette was among them, and saw flies flying about overhead.

This was enough ; she went back to the rafter, chose a home, and began to spin. Before evening, her web was completed, and her first prey caught and feasted on. Then she cleared the remains out of her chamber, and sat down in state to think ; for Twinette was now a philosopher. It came to her while she was spinning her web. As she crossed and twisted the threads, her ideas grew clearer and clearer, or she fancied so, which did almost as well. Each line she fastened

brought its own reflection ; and this was the way they went on :—

“ Empty space is an old wife’s tale ”—she fixed that very tight. “ Sight and touch are very imperfect guides ”—this crossed the other at an angle. “ Two or three things can easily be in one place at the very same time ”—this seemed very loose till she tightened it by a second. “ Sunshine and wind and scent and sound don’t drive each other out of their places ”—that held firm. “ When one has sensations there is something to cause them, whether one sees it, or feels it, or finds it out, or not ”—this was a wonderful thread, it went right round the web and was fastened down in several places. “ Light and darkness, and sunshine and wind, and sound and sensation, and fright and pleasure, don’t keep away flies ”—the little interlacing threads looked quite pretty as she placed them. “ How many things I know of that I don’t know much about ”—the web got thicker every minute. “ And perhaps there may be ever so much more beyond—ever so much more—ever so much more—be-

yond." Those were her very last words. She kept repeating them till she finished her web ; and when she sat up in state, after supper, to think, she began to repeat them again ; for she could think of nothing better or wiser to say. But this was no wonder, for all her thoughts put together made nothing but a cobweb, after all !

And when the Turk's-head broom swept it, with others, from the roof, Twinette was no longer in the little chamber below. She had died and bequeathed her cobweb-wisdom to another generation. But as it was only cobweb-wisdom, spiders remain spiders still, and still weave their webs in the roofs of churches without fathoming the mystery of unseen presences below.



BIRDS IN THE NEST.



7





*"Eight Darlings in one nest! what
a sight to fill one's heart!"*
Birds in the Nest.



BIRDS IN THE NEST.

" Safe in the hand of one disposing pow'r,
Or in the natal, or the mortal hour,
All Nature is but art, unknown to thee;
All chance, direction, which thou canst not see."

POPE'S ESSAY ON MAN.

ONCE upon a time there was in a wood a nest which held eight of the dearest little eggs a hen-mother ever looked upon with joy. At least this particular hen-mother thought so, and her mate rather agreed with her when they talked the matter over together. And his opinion had weight, for in his flights he sometimes saw other eggs, and would tell her about them on his return. But what could they be to her own? Nothing could be better than what was perfect, and her own

were perfect in her eyes. What a fine shape they had ! How beautifully rounded ! How soft their tint ! How tasteful the arrangement of spots ! All others must needs be too light or too dark, or too something or other, to suit her particular taste. The sea-gull, who ate snails in the garden, boasted of his family egg as twenty times larger and twenty times more beautiful. "But if it *be* more beautiful, what can that matter to us," said the hen-mother, in conclusion, "when ours are perfect in our eyes, and we are so very happy ?"

"And shall be so much happier yet," pursued her mate, who, as a travelled bird, had had experience, and knew what was in store ; "when the little ones awake to a life and enjoyment of their own, and can feed and sing, and know and love us both."

"Ah, to be sure, to be sure, that will be rapture, indeed," cried the hen-mother. "Thank you so much for telling me ! How silly I was, thinking I was as happy as I could possibly be ! Of course I shall be happier by-and-by ; and

how *very* happy that will be, for I am happy enough now. I wish the day were come !”

Yet she was very happy ; but most so when she forgot she was to be happier still.

And by-and-by the time came ; and when the little ones were all hatched, and could peer about and see their father bringing food, and open their mouths and swallow it very fast, and cry for more,—

“ Now then, at last the happiness is perfect,” said the hen-mother ; “ I have nothing further to wish for.”

And she watched them being fed and satisfied, and never felt hungry herself, till they had had plenty and were at ease.

“ Eight darlings in one nest ! What a sight to fill one’s heart ! There may be trouble enough, it’s true, and very little room to rest ; but one’s own eight beautiful creatures round one, under one’s wing, all chirping and alive—this is perfection of happiness indeed !”

“ You cannot say so just yet,” sang the mate ; but he did not tell her this quite at first. He

waited for a soft evening in early summer before he piped about what was in store.

"You cannot say so just yet. Our darlings are very sweet, but they are poor helpless things at present. Wait till they have grown more feathers, have learnt to take care of themselves, and fly and sing. They cannot be perfect, nor can your happiness be perfect, till then. Some of our neighbours are beforehand with us. There were fine young birds among the boughs yesterday, twitting our youngsters in their songs with being behindhand altogether."

"They will not have to twit long, I suppose," exclaimed the hen-mother rather angrily. "Of course you will bring ours forward as fast as you can. Of course they must not be behind their neighbours. Of course they must learn to take care of themselves, and fly and sing, like the rest. Dear, dear! how silly I was! But thank you so much for telling me. It's very well to be easily pleased, and the poor helpless things are very sweet, as you say; but of course it will be *a much* grander thing when they have grown to

be fine young birds like those others; able to take care of themselves and to twit their neighbours who can't. And of course I shall be as happy again. I wish the time were come."

And it did come; but there was a great deal of trouble to be taken first. The little ones had to be nursed and fed till their feathers had grown, and then they had to be trained, by slow degrees and with much care, to use their young wings in flight. Now the hen-mother had left her mate no rest till he began to teach; for, first, she was jealous for her children's credit; and secondly, she wanted to feel what it was to be as happy as it was possible to be. Happy enough she was, but for this wish.

But alas! for the trouble and fear that came over her when the teaching really began. The eight darlings must come out of their nest, from under her wing; she could help them no longer—they could scarcely help themselves. Yet they must spread the feeble pinion, and strain the unpractised muscle, and run a risk of failure and even life, to insure success.

Oh, poor hen-mother, what a trying change was this, though brought about by her own especial desire! No wonder that, while the teaching was going on, she would sit and shake with fright, and wish all manner of foolish things: that they were back in the nest, of course; but far more than that—even that they were back in the old baby days again, in the eggshells of their first existence, unconscious of life and of them. “They were all under my wing then, at any rate,” said she; “my own dear little ones with me, and I with them: what more could I want?”

And, oh dear, when the youngsters were safe in the nest once more at night, how she used to gather them under her wings with joy!

“I am getting to like night better than day,” said she at last to her mate, “for then my birds are in the nest again. You are training them very cleverly, I know, and I was the first to want them to be clever like other young birds, and they are getting cleverer day by day, I dare say, so I ought to be happier; but the happiness is

not as pleasant as it was. How can it be, when they are away so much, and the empty nest stares me in the face? The risks are so many too, till they can really fly well, and I tremble with fear. But all is right at night, when you all come back and sing. Yes, if it wasn't for thinking of the morrow, the happiness would be perfect indeed then : if it were always evening, I mean, and they and you were always here."

"It is natural you should feel as you do," replied the mate; "but you mistake the cause. If you are not quite happy yet, it is merely because things are not quite perfect, that is all. When the young ones can fly really well, for instance, there will no longer be any risk; and when they can sing better still, our music will be pleasanter than ever; and when they are able and independent, all your cares and anxieties will be at an end. Wait a little longer, and you will be happy indeed."

The hen-mother sighed. "I suppose you must be right," said she; "I will wait. But if I could sing myself, I would sing a mother's song about

the birds in the nest. It may not have been perfection, but it was a very happy time."

So she waited and did her best to be pleased. But for longer and longer intervals the empty nest stared her in the face, and she thought many things she did not dare to say—even the old foolish wish that they were all in their eggshells again.

Still, every evening, when they came back and perched in the boughs, if not in the nest, and the singing grew sweeter and sweeter, she cheered up and rejoiced once more.

And now at last the nestlings were full-grown birds, and could fly and sing as well as their parents. Perfection had come; they were independent; nobody's young birds could twit them now. "But now, of course," said their father, "they must go out and seek their fortunes, as we did, and choose mates, and settle in life for themselves. You see the justice of this?"

The hen-mother, to whom he was speaking, answered "Yes;" but her heart was half broken. And when he added, "This is the real perfection

of happiness to parents," she made no answer at all.

"It ought to be, perhaps," thought she to herself, "but it isn't so with me. I wonder why?" She sat on the edge of the empty nest and wondered still; but she couldn't find out the secret there.

Then the young ones piped to her from the woods; and at last said she, "Things are altered, I see; I will go to them!" and the very thought comforted her as she flew away. And when she had found them, and watched them in the full enjoyment of their own young life—listened to them as they warbled merrily to each other among the trees, or sported with friends here and there, she began to understand the whole matter. She was rejoicing in their joy rather than in her own.

And time went on: and one day as she sat, so listening, on a branch in the centre of the wood, her mate by her side, said she, "It is all becoming quite clear, and I can see that you were right on the whole. This is nearer the perfection of happiness than anything else could be, but the

quite perfect is not to be had. Still, this is nearest and best ; whether sweetest or not, I scarcely know. But thank you for telling me ! I was selfish before : wanted my own darlings to myself, under my own wing, in my own particular nest—safe, as I called it—foolish that I was ! Oh, narrow, narrow thought ! As if one place was safer than another, when the sun looks down everywhere, streaming warmth and comfort upon all ! I see things differently now. The wood is but a larger nest, and those that live in it but a larger family. I spread out my love a little wider, and behold my happiness spreads out too ! Though each in turn, for a time, must form his own little circle of joy, the whole must form one larger circle together ; and who knows where it is to end ? ”

She ceased, and then listened again, and truly the wood was ringing with melodies : her mate by her side ; her children now here, now there with the dear ones they loved. The circle grew wider and wider as time went further on.

But by-and-by, when age had crept over both,

the mate had tender thoughts himself of old times, and tenderer still for her. She had not been wrong altogether, he whispered softly and kindly. It was not selfishness only that had filled her heart. He would sing her the song she used to wish she could have sung herself—a mother's song about the birds in the nest.

And it went to the hearts of both.

* * * * *

Other mothers in other nests, lift up your souls, as the circle widens from your feet. "One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all," has all together now in the circle of His care; yea, even though a world, or the change we call death, may seem to divide them: and HE will bring His own together at last into one home—the "Father's House:"—one home, be the mansions never so many!



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